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Nashua/New Hampshire

# Nashua Downtown Master Plan

*Prepared by* URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Prepared for
City of Nashua, New Hampshire

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Special thanks to the countless Nashua residents, too many to name, who gave their time and energy to this effort.

# Executive Summary

# A Vision for the Next Five Years

## Introduction



Nashua's history is its greatest amenity; it imbues the City with authenticity, character, and strength. Nashua's history is also its greatest teacher; its past teaches us powerful lessons about the importance of urban design. The Nashua Master Plan (the "Plan") strives to recognize and leverage these strengths while incorporating the needs and demands of a globally competitive 21st century city. The execution of this Plan will set Nashua apart from its regional competitors, assuring its health, vitality, and sustainability for generations to come.

Nashua New Hampshire is strategically located on the Nashua River, where water could power the textile mills. The 1823 Plan for the City, drawn by Asher Benjamin,, established a remarkably powerful yet simple design concept for the City. The Olive Street Church and the Nashua Manufacturing Company were set on axis with each other, within walking distance, on opposite ends of Pearl Street. Storefronts and services for the town's people were located between these two landmarks. A longer avenue (the present Walnut Street) connected

*Building upon existing investments and branching out from Main Street, Nashua will transform itself from having a notable Main Street to being a great Downtown.*

the Mill to the "South Commons." The first residential neighborhood was established between the South Commons and the Mill. On any given day, one could walk from the Commons, to work, to church, and to the stores lining Main Street.

The basic lessons from Benjamin's plan were applied for nearly 100 years, until the 1960's and 1970's when its elegant urban design was compromised. In an attempt to save its Downtown, the City embarked on an ill-fated urban renewal program.

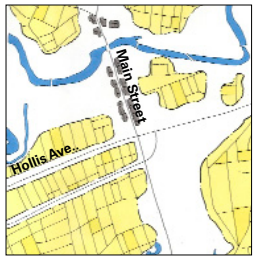
Throughout the 1980's and 1990's, thanks to grassroots organizing and one small intervention after another, Downtown re-established itself. Today, it is a generally accepted fact that Downtown Nashua has a "nice Main Street." Sidewalks are lively, events well attended, and investment strong.

The general appearance of health however mask some problems. Behind Main Street, the many neighborhoods are fragmented and plagued by disinvestment. They are not connected physically or economically to each other or to Main Street. Furthermore, Main Street itself, south of City Hall, has been developed as a suburban commercial strip.

As one charette participant stated: "We have a good Main Street; now we need a great Downtown." The purpose of this Plan is to accomplish that task. It will do so by:

1 **Celebrating Nashua's primary amenity: Its heritage.** The clarity of Asher Benjamin's design has informed many aspects of this plan. Most notably, it serves as a constant reminder that great urban places encourage social interaction through a mix of uses, and that community building must be consciously designed to a human scale.

2 **Strengthening Nashua's most unrealized amenity: Its natural resources, especially the Nashua River.** Natural resources will act as a framework for the primary connections between neighborhoods and mixed use areas.



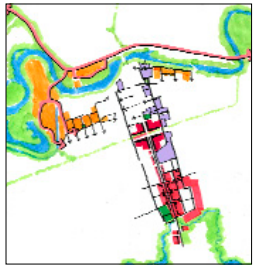

**Downtown Today**
*A portion of Main Street is strong but many of the adjacent neighborhoods are fragmented and separated from this investment by busy arterial streets.*


**Downtown Tomorrow**
*Landmarks and public spaces are stitched together with trails and improved streets, thus strengthening the Downtown as a whole.*

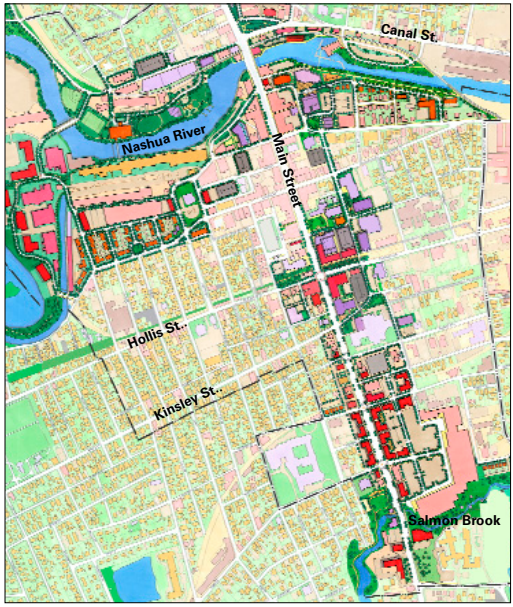
3 **Representing a consensus vision for Nashua's future.** The ideas and spirit of this document are a direct outgrowth of the intensity and passion Nashua's citizens have for their Downtown.

## The Master Plan

The foundation of the Plan is public involvement. Extensive outreach was undertaken to insure that the Plan represents the ideas brought forth by the resi-



**Concept Plan**
*Main Street will become a vibrant spine of mixed use activities connecting the natural resources of Salmon Creek and the Nashua River.*




**Concept Plan**
*Public and private initiatives along the Nashua River, Main Street, and in the neighborhoods will solidify Downtown Nashua as the heart of the region.*

dents, stakeholders, investors, and leaders of the City. The public involvement process included twenty focus groups, three public meetings, and a four day public, open design charette. In sum, over 200 individuals took part in the process.

A market study was conducted to establish the feasibility of residential and commercial markets within the five to ten-year time horizon of this Plan. The market study concluded that the residential market is, and will continue to be, Downtown's strongest market. Due to the narrow marketing and appeal of suburban housing, there is a pent up demand for a wider range of housing types and markets in Downtown Nashua, including condominiums and affordable housing. Another strong market is educational, cultural and institutional uses. These uses, though often non-profit and sometimes subsidized, are critical to diversifying Downtown's offerings and to supporting Downtown retail. The office and hotel market were not seen as vibrant.

The market study and the public process both recommended that the City focus its efforts on initiatives that are inclusive of all residents of Nashua, not simply a narrow slice of the population. Although Main Street remains the focus of Downtown, many of the Plan's recommended actions concentrate on areas beyond the lively sidewalks of Main Street. Specifically, the Master Plan addresses areas along the Nashua River, Main Street South of City Hall, and areas to the east and west of Main Street. Design interventions at these areas are the key to broadening Downtown's appeal, maximizing its market potential,

*Riverfront North, behind Cattleman's Restaurant (existing: top left) (proposed: bottom left)*

*Aerial Perspective of Downtown Nashua (existing: top right) (proposed initiatives highlighted: bottom right)*

and distinguishing it from other cities in the region.

### Initiatives

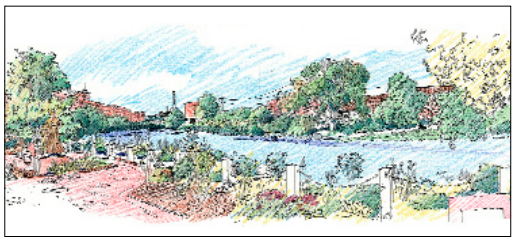
Nashua has been successful in building on its strengths and finding ways to bring private, locally-based efforts together to create a whole that is greater than any single part. Main Street North between City Hall and the River is an example.

A vibrant Main Street has been created by

- public investments in streetscaping that improve the pedestrian experience
- private building renovations that build upon the City's architectural character
- locally based investors and entrepreneurs willing to provide a product distinct from competing suburbs and malls.
- an aggressive and innovative schedule of events that showcase Nashua as the center of the region

Main Street North has become the anchor for a wide range of new uses that bundle restaurants, entertainment, and retail together as sustainable development in Downtown Nashua.

This Plan connects complimentary Downtown businesses and destinations



**Riverfront West**
*Property located in the flood plain will be redeveloped into a riverfront park.*

*Riverfront West Existing Condition (top)*

*Riverfront West Proposed Redevelopment (bottom)*

to create a series of initiatives around which different activities and developments are organized. Private efforts, along with public improvements and public/private partnerships have been formulated into five initiatives for the City:

1. Riverfront West
2. Riverfront East
3. Railroad Square
4. Main Street North
5. Main Street South

### Frameworks

In order to support these five initiatives, the Plan recommends improving upon and creating a series of frameworks that connect different parts of Downtown. The frameworks, focusing on connectivity, are designed to:

- continually enhance the pedestrian experience on the streets of Downtown
- support and extend the system of bikeways and trails that link the areas of Downtown to each other, as well as the neighborhoods, and to the region's remarkable recreational and heritage amenities
- clarify pedestrian and vehicular circulation through an incremental process of converting one-way streets

**Main Street South**
*New Streetscaping and redeveloped parking lots will transform Main Street South into a pedestrian friendly shopping street.*

*Existing Condition (top)*

*Proposed Redevelopment (bottom)*

to two-way streets

- establish an alternative for the Broad Street Parkway that provides access to development parcels, connects the trail system, and improves congestion at Railroad Square
- create guidelines for architectural character consistent with the tradition of the City and the objectives of the Plan.

### Implementation

The Plan will be implemented over 10 years. Upon completion, approximately 500 new residential units, and 500,000 new square feet of commercial/retail/office and institutional space will be added to Downtown Nashua. In addition, with construction of new riverfront parks, Performing Arts Center, Center for Nashua Heritage and Future Technology, regional and local trail connections, the Downtown will become the region's center for cultural, entertainment and recreational networks.

The primary projects to be completed within three years of adoption of this Plan will include

- Main Street South Streetscape (Design and Engineering)
- Bronstein Homes (Design and Hope VI Application)
- Broad Street Parkway (Design and Engineering)
- One Way Street Conversion Study
- Center for Nashua Heritage and Future Technology (fundraising)

Implementation of the Master Plan will create two legacies. The first legacy will be a completely revitalized Downtown with a diversified economy that benefits all residents of Nashua. Downtown Nashua will solidify itself as soul of the region,; it will become an indispensable component to the region's superior quality of life.

Equally important to the historic legacy described above, will be the legacy of new partnerships and civic cooperation that are essential to and will result from implementation of this Plan. The Plan should not be thought of as simply a way to spend public resources - rather it should be thought of as a way to form partnerships, increase investor confidence, raise capital, with the purpose of leveraging public investments.
The ideas set forth in this Plan come from the vested interests of the City's diverse body of residents and investors. The realization of these ideas rely on a coordinated, cooperative and active public sector working in tandem with a entrepreneurial private sector. The results of this private-public partnership will be a lively and vibrant Downtown for all Nashuans; a place which embodies both its history as well as the future aspirations of the region.

# Site Analysis

# 1 X-Rays



A UDA X-RAY DRAWING ALLOWS the Design team to better understand the study area, as well as illustrating for city residents and stakeholders the myriad assets and natural patterns found throughout the City. An X-Ray drawing isolates a physical element or category of land use (such as streets) to illustrate patterns and opportunities difficult to perceive when combined in a single drawing. By studying the various natural and man-made systems, urban designers can unveil the underlying patterns, problems, and opportunities of a project area. Often, from these natural, historic, and development patterns, the beginnings of strategies and solutions emerge.

UDA X-Rays are drawn at several scales. By examining the site within the context of the region, city, and immediate study area, one can begin to see the physical forces that impact and influence it. In the case of Nashua's Downtown, X-Ray drawings at the regional scale illustrate the City's strategic location within the region, while X-Rays at the site scale depict the immediate patterns of the built and natural landscape within the boundaries of the City.

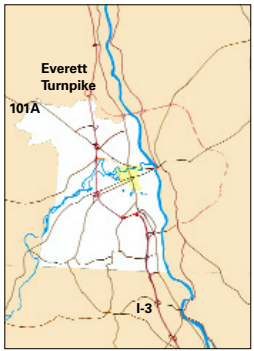

*The study area for the Plan is centered on Main Street but extends east and west to include the adjacent neighborhoods and cross streets-- the extent of the historic and traditional Downtown.*

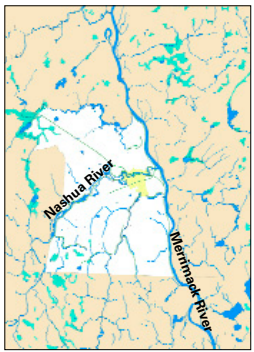
**Regional Locator Map**

*(top left)*
*Located just north of the Massachusetts state border, Nashua is the outermost major city in the Boston "commuter-shed."*

**Regional Natural Features**

*(bottom left)*
*Located at the confluence of the Merrimack and Nashua rivers, the City is connected to watersheds and natural systems that reach out to the region in every direction.*

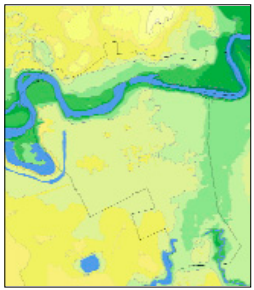

**Regional Highways**

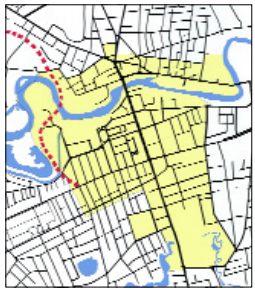
*(top right)*
*The City of Nashua is located at the convergence of several arterial roads, each well-connected to the Interstates.*

**Regional Streets**

*(bottom right)*
*Main Street is one of only two surface road crossings of the Nashua River within the City. Downtown Nashua comprises a collection of colliding, irregular grids and connective arterial roads.*
*The suburban street pattern, where most of the new growth has occurred in the last 10 - 20 years is distinctly different than the urban grid of the historic town*

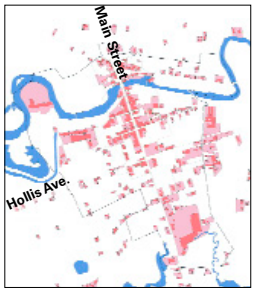
**Topography**
*(top left)*
*The Downtown gently slopes to the Nashua River from the south, with the land dropping more steeply to the river on its north side. The lowland stretching from the Nashua River to Salmon Brook represents unstable soils for development and has therefore historically been an industrial area.*





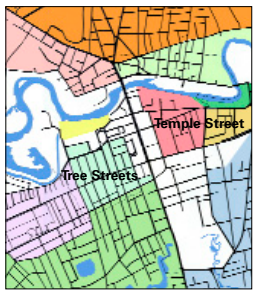
**Streets**
*(top right)*
*The street framework of Downtown Nashua is comprised of several grids. South of the Nashua River, the grids are organized relative to Main Street. North of the river, the street grids respond to the several diagonal arterials that converge at Railroad Square.*

**Commercial**
*(middle left)*
*Main Street retail development north of Hollis Street is a relatively dense concentration of small-scale, street-oriented buildings that form pedestrian-scaled spaces. South of Hollis Street, the commercial buildings on Main Street are scaled to the automobile.*




**Building Footprint and Flood Plain**
*(middle right)*
*Downtown is generally comprised of medium – sized commercial buildings, small-scale residential buildings, and long, linear industrial buildings. Several of the original Nashua Manufacturing Company buildings, now converted to other uses, were originally built in the 100-year flood plain (shown in light blue)*

**Residential**
*(bottom left)*
*Many of the City's neighborhoods are intact; however, their edges are frayed. Nashua's neighborhoods engage neither the river, nor Main Street. .*




**Neighborhoods**
*(bottom right)*
*The neighborhoods of Downtown Nashua are delineated by the arterials and corridors that carry cross town traffic.*

**Institutions and Open Space**

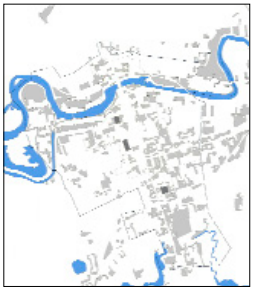
*(top left)*
*The core of Downtown Nashua has many institutional buildings (purple) but no central park or public gathering space. The beginnings of a network of trails (red dots) follow the natural areas along the Nashua River and the abandoned rail line.*

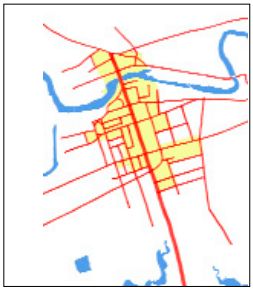
**Industrial**

*(top right)*
*Industrial uses dominate the edges of the Nashua River and rail lines. Throughout the City, many of the former industrial uses have been converted to offices or commercial space.*

**Parking**

*(bottom left)*
*Surface parking lots (light grey) are a dominant land use in much of Downtown. Only a few parking garages (dark grey) presently exist forcing much valuable Downtown real estate to be used as surface parking.*





**Connectivity**

*(bottom right)*
*Despite having tight grids of streets and being located at the traditional center of the City, few streets extend beyond the Downtown.*

# II Precedents



THE BEST DESIGN SOLUTIONS emerge from the inherent patterns and vernacular of a region. Nashua is one of several Merrimack Valley river towns unique even within the greater region of which it is a part. Planned as settlements to support the textile manufacturing industry in New England in the early nineteenth century, Nashua and its sister cities along the Merrimack River are strikingly similar in their history and planning. By studying the original urban form and the redevelopment that has occurred along the Merrimack Valley as the economy and development base has changed over time, Nashua can develop strategies to root itself in its unique past while planning for an ever-changing future.

Other Merrimack Valley cities similar in both form and history to Nashua, such as Lowell, Lawrence, and Haverhill, provide precedents of exemplary spaces, development strategies, urban design approaches steeped in a similar regional flavor and industrial past.

# III Historic Analysis



THOUGH DANIEL ABBOTT IS WIDELY REGARDED as the "Father of Nashua," the area of the City now known as Downtown was designed by Asher Benjamin from 1824 through 1827. Primarily known for his use of the pattern book for residential design, Nashua was Benjamin's only foray into town planning. Benjamin originally planned Nashua as an industrial town with an area for the region's textile manufacturing on the river, drawing power for its operation from Mine Falls located three miles west. His ideas were utilitarian and simple. A north-south main street provided a bridge across the Nashua River at its north end, leading to Union Square, a public space and railroad depot known today as Railroad Square. A cross-axis was established along Factory Street, which defined the heart of the Downtown. At one end of the Factory Street axis stood the Olive Street Church, later Pilgrim Church; and at the other end, the great smoke stack of the Nashua Manufacturing Company. These simple but powerful urban relationships remained intact for over 150 years

*The Olive Street Church, Asher Benjamin's beautiful religious structure, defined the end of a visual axis between itself and the Nashua Manufacturing Company buildings.*

After World War II, the integrity of Benjamin's plan began to erode. In 1984, the Pilgrim Church was demolished. Indian Head Plaza, a 6-story office building surrounded by parking, and a small park were built on the site of the Church. One of Nashua's landmarks was lost and Benjamin's plan was weakened.

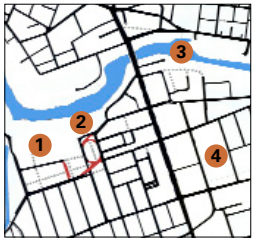
Other changes since 1960 further affected the Downtown. Streets were vacated, traffic patterns changed, buildings demolished, and parking lots built in an effort to accommodate the automobile. These measures were ineffective in saving Downtown from its slide in the 1970's. Specifically, the Bronstein Apartments, Courthouse Oval, library development and Spring/Elm Street Parking lots, although well conceived, had negative urban design consequences.

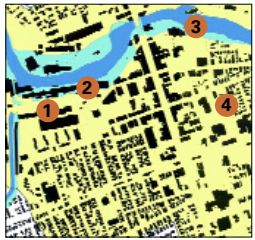
Nashua weathered the 1980's and early 1990's with studies and projects that led to important public improvements and traditions, such as the distinctive brick sidewalks. Nashua's resurgence in the late 1990's is due in no small part to a revived appreciation for the City's heritage. This was confirmed in the public outreach effort, of this study, as it became clear there was a strong understanding and stewardship of the history and heritage of Nashua. This public awareness has manifested itself in restored buildings, civic programming and events, such as the Holiday Stroll, vintage signage on private buildings, and historically-appropriate streetscaping. These actions have re-established a contemporary authenticity to the City, have created a sense of place, and have made Downtown Nashua a regional destination


**Benjamin's Plan for Nashua**

*Asher Benjamin (bottom) created a plan for Nashua where axial relationships provided focus on prominent City structures. Pearl Street was bookended by the Nashua Manufacturing Company and the Olive Street Church, (later, Pilgrim Church). The Hunt Building terminates Main Street in the north.*

Appreciation for local culture, as well as a focus on the City's new technological development will be featured in the proposed Center for Nashua Heritage and Future Technology, located on Factory Street and overlooking a new riverfront park. This museum will display Nashua's unique history as the foundation on which the City can meet the challenges of the future.




**Changes since 1960**

**1** *Bronstein Apartments – Street vacated for public housing*

**2** *Courthouse Oval – Streets reconfigured into a confusing one-way system*

**3** *Nashua Public Library – Park Street vacated creating a block with poor access*

**4** *Spring and Elm Streets – Many buildings demolished for parking lots*

# The Planning Process

# 1 Overview of the Process



Prompted by a recommendation in the Nashua 2000 Master Plan, the city of Nashua commissioned Urban Design Associates (UDA) to prepare a Downtown Master Plan in the summer of 2002. This Plan, is an update of Nashua 2000 and will be based on public input, will act as a framework for future development and decision making and will provide guidance to the City in their efforts to:

1. Seek and evaluate development proposals, and
2. Prioritize public infrastructure investments.

The UDA team consisted of Urban Design Associates (lead firm), Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin Lopez Rinehart (transportation planning) and Stuart Patz and Associates (market analysis). In addition, the UDA team relied heavily on the technical, institutional and organizational assistance of the City's Community Development Division and Public Works Division. The views and knowledge of city staff were integral in crafting this plan. Finally, and most importantly, the team relied on spirited and enthusiastic input from Nashua's residents and stakeholders.

Citizen participation, central to the planning process, was strong. In an effort to maximize public input, the planning team cast a wide net of outreach opportunities including inter-

**Public Meetings**
*The Master Plan Team met with the citizens of Nashua to gather input and learn of their goals and vision for the City's future.*

views, focus groups meetings, public meetings and open houses, culminating in a public design charrette.

### Phase One: Data Gathering and Analysis

The UDA team began the planning process with a two-day data gathering trip to Nashua in August 2002. During this visit, the team conducted focus group meetings and interviews. In addition, the UDA team photographed the Downtown, and conducted site reconnaissance in order to become familiar with the region, Nashua, and especially its Downtown. At the same time, data was collected on land use, zoning, market research, and transportation. Additionally, the team documented precedents from similar Merrimack Valley river towns. (Lowell, Lawrence, and Haverhill.)

In September 2002, the UDA team traveled to Nashua for additional meetings. The purpose of this trip was to conduct a public meeting and additional focus group meetings.

The data gathering phase resulted in an extensive set of UDA X-Ray drawings and precedent drawings that proved instrumental throughout the process.

### Phase Two : Exploring Alternatives

The second phase of the project began with a work session in UDA's office in Pittsburgh. The UDA team and the City staff met to prepare for the design charette. One result of the work session was a set of design principles.

The majority of Phase Two occurred during a week-long design charrette conducted on Main Street in Nashua at the former Goodale's Bike Shop. During the week, the focus groups reconvened, the Steering Committee met twice, and open houses were held. Concurrent with these meetings, the UDA team developed plans, tested ideas, and continuously revised and refined designs according to ongoing stakeholder and citizen input.

Phase Two of the process culminated in a public meeting on Thursday night at which the design for Downtown Nashua were presented and additional citizen input was collected.

### Phase Three: Deciding

Based upon feedback from the public meeting and the Steering Committee, and the city staff, the UDA team prepared a draft plan for review and comment. This plan, upon adoption by the City, will become the blueprint for Downtown Nashua's development over the next ten years.

# II Summary of Interviews and Focus Groups



THROUGHOUT THE FALL OF 2002, the UDA team conducted interviews and focus group meetings. Focus groups included:

- City Planning Staff
- Nashua Historical Society
- Nashua Police Department
- Nashua Fire Rescue
- Aldermanic Planning & Economic Development Committee
- Nashua Regional Planning Commission
- Nashua Public Works Division
- The Great American Downtown
- Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce
- Downtown Ward Aldermen
- Nashua Board of Aldermen

The UDA team also conducted individual interviews with:

- Mayor Bernard A. Streeter
- George Crombie, Director of the Public Works Division
- Pastor Paul Berube, Grace Fellowship Church
- Reverend Evans, First Congregational Church
- Anne Barnett, French Hill Resident and Member of Inner City Voice
- Grace Grogan-Hicks, Executive Director of Nashua Housing Authority
- Klaas Nijhuis, Interim Director of Community Services Division
- Angelo Marino, Manager of City Assessing Department

**Design Charette**
*The Master Plan team worked closely with residents, stakeholders, and City staff.*

## Strengths, Weaknesses and Opportunities

At each focus group meeting, interview and public meeting, participants were asked the same three questions:

1. What are the strengths of Downtown Nashua?
2. What are the weaknesses of Downtown Nashua?
3. What is your vision for the future?

The Downtown assets considered strongest and cited most frequently related to its character character and its sense of place created by the pedestrian-friendly environment on Main Street North.

The liabilities most often identified included the confusing, local one-way street system, the disconnect between the Downtown neighborhoods and Main Street, and the development along Main Street, south of Hollis Street.

Visions included a "complete" Downtown in which neighborhoods were connected to and interwoven with Downtown retail and institutions, the development of an expanded, connective riverfront park system, the addition of cultural and entertainment facilities, and an improved public transportation system.

The strengths, weaknesses, and visions are listed in more detail on this page and the following two pages.

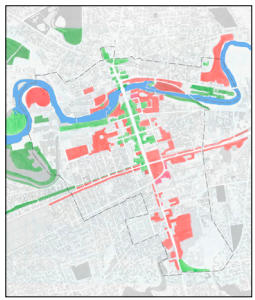
## Strengths

### History

- Heritage of Nashua as one of the first planned industrial cities in the Northeast
- The preserved and rehabilitated buildings along Main Street of historic and/or local character

### Main Street

- The walkable, vibrant, and safe environment between the Nashua River and City Hall
- New investments and restaurants creating an active sidewalk and street
- Variety of uses along this spine
- Strong sense of place rooted in traditional streetscape standards
- Locally owned and operated businesses – no national franchises



**Strengths and Weaknesses**
*Main Street North is depicted in green, representing the Downtown's historic core and its strength. Shown in red, the Downtown's main weaknesses are its underutilized riverfront and the vacuous feel and uncoordinated planning of Main Street South.*

## Strengths (continued)

### Amenities

- Riverfront park investments
- Library is a well-organized resource center for the City
- Multitude of churches and institutions
- Transit center
- Rail trail and other developing trail connections
- Low taxes

## Weaknesses

### Main Street

- Brick sidewalks showing signs of wear and disrepair
- South of Hollis Street is not pedestrian-friendly
- No major entertainment, performance, or educational uses
- No hotel or meeting conference spaces
- No central park or gathering space
- A lack of modestly priced goods and services

### Streets and Parking

- One-way streets are confusing and detrimental to retail development
- Parking is not well managed; excess parking on west side; shortage on east side of Main Street
- Only one river crossing

### General

- Downtown neighborhoods are detached from the retail district
- Parking along the river is a blight to this natural amenity.
- Spring and Elm Streets act as service roads for Downtown parking lots
- Spring and Elm Streets separate the adjacent neighborhoods from Main Street

**Strength: The Nashua Public Library**
*Nashua's Library is an excellent resource; however, it suffers from poor visibility and access.*

**Weakness: Parking behind Main Street**
*The areas behind Main Street suffer from blight caused by poorly designed parking lots.*

### Visions

- A central park or gathering place
- A major riverfront park
- Diversity of uses Downtown – educational, arts, performance and cultural
- Further diversify Main Street with housing above retail buildings
- A coordinated parking strategy
- Continued support for local businesses versus national franchises
- "Downtown" to extend south to Main Street Marketplace and Salmon Brook
- Develop gateways to Downtown and a greater sense of arrival
- Retail for all incomes
- Commuter rail to Boston
- Extensive bike and trail system
- New housing: both affordable and market rate
- Improved public transportation
- Improved and revitalized Railroad Square

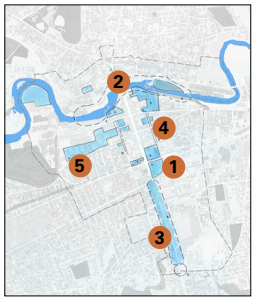
### Opportunities

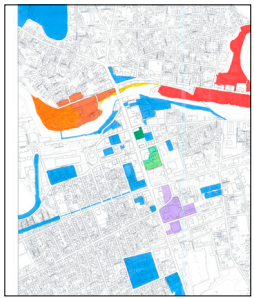
Several opportunity areas emerged after mapping Downtown's strengths and weaknesses. These strategic areas are the parts of Downtown where planning and taking action is most important and where benefits will be greatest. Generally, opportunity areas offer the chance to to bolster the identified strengths, eradicate identified weaknesses, and to implement citizen visions.

The primary strategic opportunity areas were identified as: (see map below left)

1. The corner of Main Street and Hollis Street
2. The Riverfront
3. Main Street South between Hollis Street and Allds Street
4. Spring and Elm Streets
5. The Millyard

**Opportunities**
*The Master Plan establishes strategic locations in Downtown Nashua where design efforts will lead to further cultural and economic development.*



**Property Ownership**
*Many of the opportunity areas are owned by just a few parties. The City of Nashua is a primary owner of parcels in the Downtown, as depicted in blue.*

# III Urban Design Principles



THE UDA TEAM, in conjunction with city staff, developed several urban design principles prior to the design charrette. These principles acted as a compass for the direction of the Master Plan development. Design exploration at the charrette was pursued under the guidance of the following principles:

1. Preserve and celebrate the history of Nashua.
2. Reconnect Downtown to the surrounding neighborhoods.
3. Create a gathering place, a common, or a village green as the center of Downtown.
4. Connect to the regional open space system.
5. Calm and clarify traffic.
6. Develop a parking strategy for Downtown.
7. Develop urban design alternatives for the transitional areas behind Main Street.
8. Diversify Main Street to become a mixed-use corridor - including retail, offices, government, cultural experiences, housing, medical resources, hospitality centers, and entertainment uses.
9. Create an interconnected pedestrian friendly network.
10. Develop guidelines for appropriate massing and height.

# Market Strategies

# 1 Economic Development Strategies



GREAT DOWNTOWNS ARE DIVERSE. They center a region by serving a substantial list of needs for a variety of residents. With a stable and established Main Street North, Downtown Nashua must now diversify and expand its economic base by increasing investor confidence and by serving the needs of a broader cross-section of City residents.

Downtown Nashua must also carefully market and position itself in the region. Downtown Nashua will never out-compete other market areas, such as Daniel Webster Highway and Route 101A for large-scale, discount retailers and rapid housing production. Instead of competing with these market areas, Downtown Nashua should create a lasting and unique identity for itself – an identity that cannot be replicated elsewhere in the region. Diversifying the Downtown economy by creating a "24-hour Downtown" and establishing unique markets based on sustainable strategies – not short term market trends – will be the key ingredients to a vital Downtown for years to come.

**Downtown Retail**
*The continued, strategic revitalization of Main Street in its entirety, both north and south of Hollis Street, must be coordinated and is vital to the further growth of the Downtown.*

# II Residential Strategies



RESIDENTIAL DEMAND WILL LIKELY CONTINUE to be strong in the upcoming five to ten years. The City's population has doubled in forty years and grown approximately fifteen percent over the past ten years. Most of the residential growth has consisted of typical suburban single family housing on undeveloped land west of Everett Turnpike.The growth has served traditional suburban households (primarily married parents with school age children.) Ironically, despite the fact most of the new housing products in Nashua have catered to "traditional households", this household type represents only one quarter of the region's households. The other three quarters consist of mostly single persons living alone, single head of household with children or other dependents, or married couples with no children. These underserved markets are the household types that can be targeted for Downtown Nashua's housing.

Like many regions across the country that have funnelled their new housing construction to suburban areas, the demand for new construction housing in urban areas is very strong and relatively untapped. Thus there is strong market support for new housing in Downtown Nashua, targeted to a large market of "non-traditional" households.

**Bronstein Apartments**
*The revitalization of this public housing area located near the heart of Downtown into a mixed-income community is a great great opportunity for urban residential development.*

First, there is an immediate demand for affordable housing. Downtown Nashua is the historic center of a fast-growing and affluent sub-region (consisting of Amherst, Brookline, Hollis, Hudson, Litchfield, etc.) With its plentiful supply of smaller and older homes, Downtown Nashua has experienced significant growth in the low and moderate income populations.

Second, there is an immediate demand for multi-family condominium housing in Downtown Nashua. Most of the region's low-income rental housing is in Downtown Nashua; as a result,owner-occupied housing is at a lower percentage than the rest of Nashua. The introduction of market rate condominium housing would bring stability to Downtown's housing stock and broaden the range of housing options.

The Master Plan identifies locations for affordable and market rate housing. The redevelopment of the publicly-owned Bronstein Apartments is a perfect opportunity for a mixed-income, urban development. Physically obsolete, Bronstein Apartments inefficiently and ineffectively occupies a key site in Downtown Nashua. The Master Plan proposes a redevelopment program of approximately 100 units (1/3 market-rate rental housing, 1/3 public housing, and 1/3 low income tax-credit housing). The new development would be economically and physically integrated with the Tree Streets neighborhood and with Downtown Nashua. If the redevelopment site includes the County Health and Human Services Building, the new development can be built in phases without relocation of any of the current Bronstein Apartments' residents.

In addition the the Bronstien Homes there are other potential sites for affordable housing in Downtown Nashua. Apartment units atop first floor retail on Main Street as well as selected housing sites along Main Street South provide aditional opprotunities for affordable housing.

New market rate condominium housing is also proposed in several locations. Riverfront West presents the strongest site for new housing. With ClockTower Place's conversion to housing in 1989, the first wave of "pioneers" settled in Downtown. Buildings in the Millyard and several Nashua Corporation buildings can be renovated to create unique housing opportunities in a unique urban setting. Overall, the Millyard and the Nashua Corporation buildings have the capacity to add up to 500 new units to Downtown Nashua.

# III Retail and Entertainment Strategies



RETAIL DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL IN DOWNTOWN NASHUA is specialized and limited. Growth will depend largely upon growth in other sectors, such as housing and entertainment. Adding entertainment uses, recreational uses, regional attractions, educational uses, and other "off-hour" uses, will help sustain the existing retail demand and create critical mass for more retail opportunities.

Due to the regional concentration of discount retailers, and national chains in the suburbs, Downtown Nashua should not compete for such commercial development. Instead, Downtown Nashua should seek a competitive position in a specific retail market consisting of:

- Downtown neighborhood-serving retail
- Visitor and tourist-oriented retail
- Daytime retail supporting Downtown businesses
- Selected, specialized regional retail seeking an urban setting
- Retail serving the myriad uses proposed in the Master Plan such as performing arts, recreational, educational.

To this end, the Master Plan recommends creating a second retail node along Main Street South between Otterson Avenue and Salmon Brook Park. Anchored by the recently renovated Globe Plaza, now the Main Street Marketplace, the Main Street South retail node will complement, but not compete with Main Street North.

**Retail and Entertainment**
*Continued infill initiatives and construction of new cultural, performance, and entertainment venues in the Downtown will provide nightlife to complement existing restaurants and attractions.*

### Entertainment

The Market Study concluded there is a need for better quality space to serve the existing performing arts market in the City. Currently, Nashua-area performance and arts groups are using several local facilities scattered around the City. In addition, there is a potential for a Downtown Performing Arts Center to compete for a regional performing arts market that is not currently attracted to the area. The market study recommends a new 400 to 500 seat Performing Arts Facility in downtown Nashua to be developed in the short term to meet the needs of arts groups attracting smaller audiences.

A larger facility (800-1000 seats) is not recommended because it will compete directly with several recently built, high quality facilities in surrounding communities. Construction of such a facility is significantly more expensive than a 400-seat venue, is dependent on touring acts, would be in direct competition with facilities in nearby cities, and perhaps most significant, is not needed for performing arts groups currently operating in Nashua, with the exception of the Nashua Symphony..

The Master Plan recommends 14 Court Street for development of the Performing Arts Center. The site will accommodate the recommended 400-500 seat theatre (or a 1000-seat venue if the market changes in the next few years.)

### Hotel

The Market Study concluded there is not currently a strong market for a hotel in Downtown Nashua due to lack of major room-night generators. The overall Nashua hotel market is currently soft because business travel is flat. Demand for a hotel will not likely emerge for at least three to five years.

The Market Study recommends long-term planning for a 75-room, limited service hotel that would serve the needs of business and leisure travelers to the Nashua area who prefer competitively-priced hotel accommodations located near Downtown restaurants and


*The proposed hotel site is located adjacent to the Performing Arts Center and along the Nashua River.*

shops, to rooms located along the Interstate. The Downtown hotel would be ideally located for parents visiting students attending Rivier College, for example, as well as for travelers visiting the Southern New Hampshire Medical Center. The proposed hotel and proposed Performing Arts Center could have a mutually beneficial relationship, as touring performers could stay at the hotel and weekend "get-away" cultural packages could be offered, linking Downtown restaurants, events at the Performing Arts Center, and hotel rooms. The suggested hotel concept would be an attractive, 4-to-5 story building with 70 to 75 standard guest rooms, a few suites, a boardroom, and an exercise room.

# Initiative Areas and Opportunities

# 1 Introduction



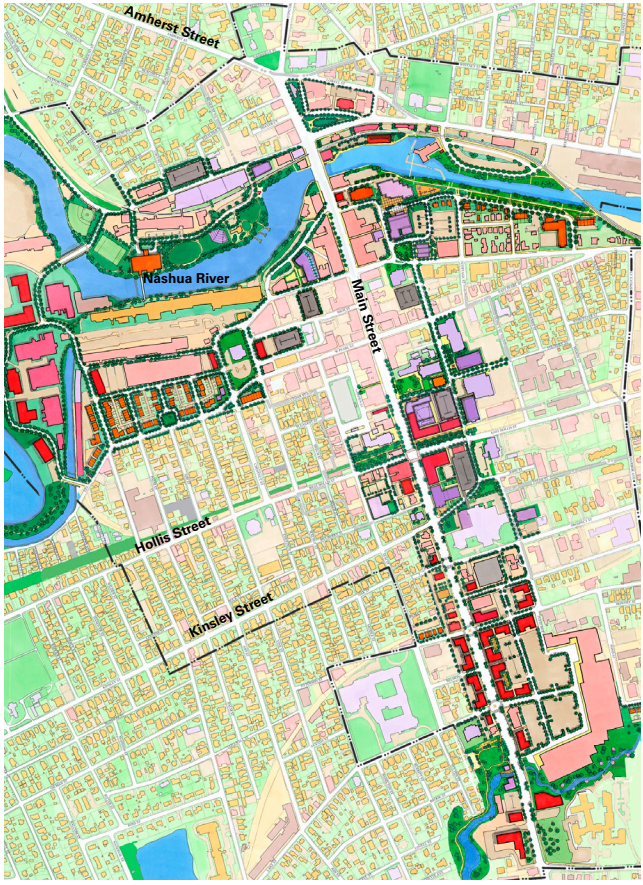
THE MASTER PLAN RELIES ON A BUNDLE of strategies that work together to knit Nashua's Downtown into a single, cohesive whole. These strategies, in the form of five initiatives (see map below), build upon the strengths and alleviate the weaknesses of the Downtown. Together, these five initiatives will help Downtown transform itself from a good Main Street to a great Downtown. These strategies are illustrated and described in the following five chapters.

To be successful, it is imperative that the streets, parks and other public infrastructure be improved simultaneously with the development proposed in each initiative area.

*Initiative areas*

**Master Plan**

*The Master Plan is comprised of many initiatives throughout Downtown. Implementation will help transform Downtown from a good Main Street to a great Downtown.*

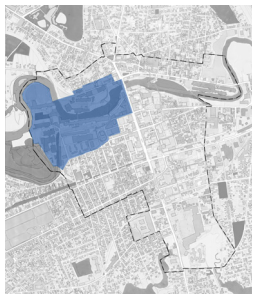


# II Riverfront West



THE TERM "RIVERFRONT WEST" DOES NOT currently exist in the everyday language of Nashua residents. Historically, the Nashua River was both the engine and the sewer for industry. Only in recent years has the City begun to look at its rivers and riverfronts as opportunities for non-industrial, private investment and more importantly, for "quality of life" public investments in parks.

With only one river crossing and the historic pattern of "backing buildings onto" the river, the two sides of the Nashua River have always been viewed as separate places. The Riverfront initiatives seek to develop the river as the connector for a



*Riverfront West*

single, mixed-use community.

In order to harness the power of the river to drive the Mill's turbines, many of Nashua's oldest industrial buildings were located in the flood plain. Those that have been redeveloped have sealed off their lower floors to protect against flooding. Building new, habitable buildings in the flood plain is not feasible. Therefore, the Master Plan uses the flood plain delineation for guidance as to where buildings can and cannot be located. A riverfront park becomes the "highest and best use" for the flood plain, This proposed riverfront park will become one of Nashua's most valuable investments.


**Initiatives**

**A** *Riverfront West Park*
**B** *Nashua Corporation Buildings*
**C** *Broad Street Parkway*
**D** *Redeveloped Millyard*
**E** *Redeveloped Bronstein Apartments*
**F** *Reconfigured Courthouse Oval*
**G** *The Center for Nashua Heritage and Future Technology*

**Flood Plain**

*Many of the buildings in the proposed Riverfront West area are located in the flood plain (shown in light blue)*

### Riverfront West Park

Much of the land on the north bank of the Nashua River is in the flood plain. These parcels of land can become the jewel and center of Nashua's riverfront park system. The park should include both active and passive uses, including play fields and an outdoor amphitheater. All new development in the flood plain are event oriented structures not subject to flood plain regulations for habitable structures. Front Street will become a park drive and the new front door to fully redeveloped Nashua Corporation buildings. The regional trail system should be incorporated in the park.

On the south bank of the river, Le Parc de Notre Renaissance Francaise should be improved. The Water Street ramp currently looms over this park,


**Riverfront West Park**
*(top)*
*The flood plain will be converted into the City's largest Downtown open space, as well as being connected to the greater regional park system.*

**Clock tower Place**
*(middle)*
*Renovating more industrial buildings, like Clock tower Place, will enliven this area of Downtown with new residents.*

**Water Street Ramp**
*Le Parc de Notre Renaissance Francaise can be improved by eliminating one row of parking (existing, bottom left) and creating a screen of landscape (proposed, bottom right).*

detracting from its beauty. A row of perpendicular parking should be removed and replaced with a row of parallel parking in order to provide a planting strip to mask the base of the ramp.

### Redevelopment of Nashua Corporation Property and Buildings

Further adaptive reuse of the historic Nashua Corporation buildings will require improved access and replacement parking. The Master Plan proposes extending Front Street as a park drive for the new Riverfront West Park which will allow the Nashua Corporation buildings to reorient themselves to the river, taking advantage of a new park address.

The Master Plan also identifies four optional locations for a parking garage serving the former Nashua Corporation. The preferred location is adjacent to the Nashua Corporation buildings, across Franklin Street. This parking garage could be shared with businesses at Railroad Square and adjacent to the Main Street bridge.

All four sites for the parking garage should be more thoroughly studied by the City. The garage must achieve the following objectives:

- facilitate redevelopment of Nashua Corporation buildings
- accommodate parking needs of businesses at Railroad Square
- introduce minimal negative impacts on surrounding neighborhoods
- have multiple access and egress points
- minimize the negative impact on Railroad Square traffic flow
- minimize property acquisition, especially that of affordable housing.

### Broad Street Parkway

Directly serving this area of Downtown, the Broad Street Parkway must fulfill a number of needs:

- provide access to important redevelopment sites
- become a development address
- address issues of air quality by improving traffic congestion at Railroad Square
- serve as a framework for a trail con-

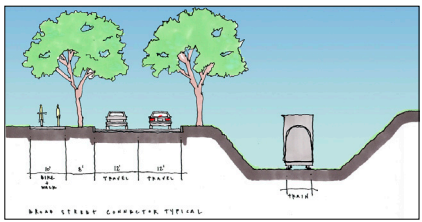

*Four potential sites for parking garage*

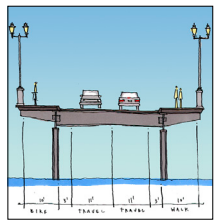
nections

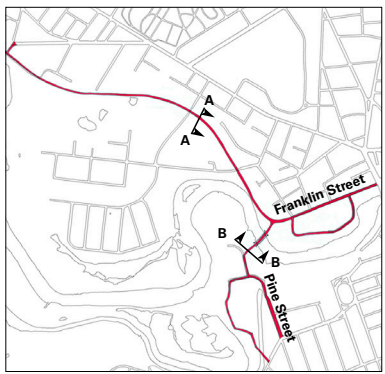
- not a Downtown bypass

The Master Plan recommends the Broad Street Parkway connect to Franklin Street as well as the Millyard. This alignment will route through-traffic directly across Railroad Square, thereby alleviating the cumbersome dogleg movement that currently exists.

In addition, and equally important, the Broad Street Parkway will have a small, two-lane bridge providing direct access to the Millyard. The bridge connection will link into an extension of Pine Street which in turn will provide access to Downtown via Central Street. This bridge connection will also provide a trail crossing from one side of the Nashua River to the other. (Additional








**Broad Street Parkway**

*The preferred alternative for the Broad Street Parkway (left) will provide access to redevelopment opportunities, as well as reduce congestion at Railroad Square.*

*Recommended cross-section (section A-A) (top left)*

*Recommended cross-section at the new bridge (section B-B) (top right)*

discussion of the Broad Street Parkway is located in the Transportation Appendix.)

### Bronstein Apartments

Currently an inward facing public housing project, the Master Plan proposes a transformation of the 48 units of public housing into a 100-unit, mixed-income, mixed-financed neighborhood. The orientation and condition of the existing units are such that rehabilitation or modernization will provide only marginal improvements in the quality of life.

The Master Plan proposes extending Palm Street, Ash Street, Vine Street, and Chestnut Street through the Bronstein site to an extended Myrtle Street. Four simple, developable blocks are thus created for medium-density housing. The County Health and Human Services building would be moved from its current location, and the block would be used for additional housing, providing a new front door to this Downtown site. A small park, central to the new housing would be built which would be an amenity for the Tree Streets Neighborhood linking the new housing to the existing neighborhood. The redevelopment of Bronstein Apartments could be phased and implemented without relocating any of the existing residents.

### Millyard Redevelopment

The Millyard represents one of Downtown's most promising redevelopment possibilities. The Millyard possesses a rich mix of industrial buildings and proximity to urban amenities. It is a prime location to create living-wage jobs along with loft housing and live/work units.

In addition to rehabilitating the existing structures, several sites have been identified for new construction . The extension of Pine Street and a new loop


**Bronstein Apartments**

*Illustrative Plan of Bronstein Apartments (top)*

*Proposed view of the redeveloped Bronstein Apartments along Central Street (bottom)*

road will access these sites and create a connection to Mine Falls Park. Redevelopment of the Millyard will create multiple trail connections between Main Street and Mine Falls Park.

### Courthouse Oval and Other Street Improvements

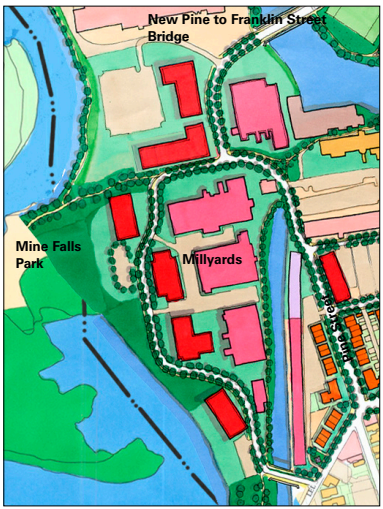
The Master Plan recommends several simple but important changes to the street system. The original Plan for Nashua, established by Asher Benjamin between 1824 and 1827, created a strong relationship between the Millyard and Main Street. Factory and Pearl Streets connected the two areas of Downtown. Over time, however, that relationship has eroded. One-way streets, traffic ovals, and inward-facing development have all but rendered the Millyards and Main Street as separate districts.

The Master Plan seeks to re-establish this direct relationship with revised street connections and modifications. Most importantly, the traffic oval around the County Courthouse should be removed and replaced with two-way streets. Two additional development sites are identified, as well, east and west of the current Courthouse.

Central Street, Pearl Street, and Factory Street should also be converted to two-way streets. (Additional discussion of one-ways street conversion is found in the Frameworks section and the Transportation Appendix).

### The Center for Nashua Heritage and Future Technology

The Center for Nashua Heritage and Future Technology is proposed along Factory Street. This 40,000 sq..ft. museum and learning center will become





*Illustrative Plan of Millyard redevelopment; new buildings in dark red (far left)*

*The Center for Nashua Heritage and Future Technology, in purple (left)*

a major attraction for Nashua. The museum will showcase Nashua's strong industrial heritage as well as provide interactive areas for learning the new technologies being developed in the Region. The recommended site, between Factory and Water Street, is a strategic Downtown site perfect for this facility. Located less than a block from Main Street, the museum and learning center will have a Main Street presence without occupying valuable Main Street retail frontage. The building will face both Factory Street and Water Street. Its front on Factory Street will help re-establish Benjamin's historic axial relationship that once existed between the Olive Street Church and the Millyard.

The facility will benefit from an existing parking garage located directly across Factory Street. An additional level may need to be added to this garage to accommodate museum visitors as well as to absorb the loss of parking that currently exists on the proposed museum site.

As a "through-block" building, the museum should provide in its design open, public access between Water Street and Factory Street. Another access point between Le Parc de Notre Renaissance Francaise and Factory Street will further aid pedestrian circulation.

*Existing Park: Le Parc de Notre Renaissance Francaise and Nashua River (top)*

*Proposed Riverfront West Park on the north bank of the Nashua River (bottom)*

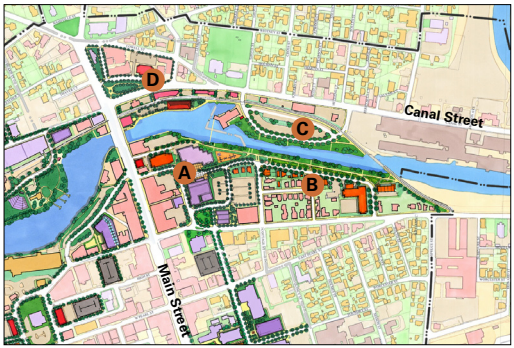
# III Riverfront East



RIVERFRONT EAST PRESENTS A DIFFERENT experience and opportunity than Riverfront West. The riverbanks are steeper, and the river is more narrow. The crashing waterfall of Riverfront East contrasts with the tranquility of the wetland pockets at Riverfront West.

*Riverfront East*

There are, however, similarities. Like Riverfront West, Riverfront East is proposed to become a single place on both sides of the river with the river as the focus. The current trails are discontinuous, inaccessible, and perceived as dangerous. Many of the buildings back onto the river with parking lots, service alleys, and backyards.




**Initiatives**

**A** *Library and Performing Arts Center*

**B** *New Temple Street neighborhood housing and Riverfront Park*

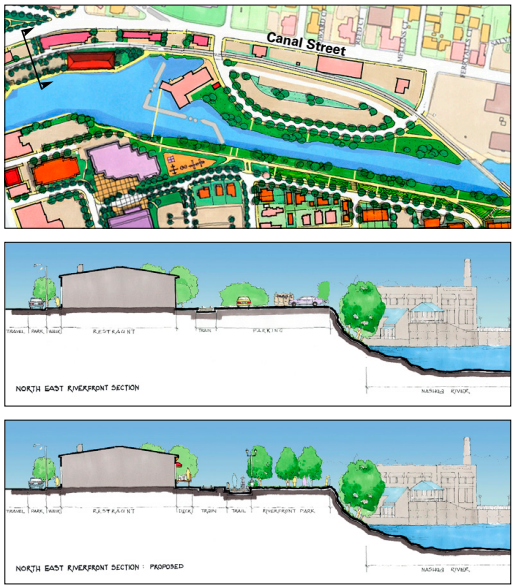
**C** *Riverfront East Park*

**D** *Railroad Square revitalization*

## Riverfront East Park

A new riverfront park is proposed along both sides of the river. The park will be narrow and linear. It will be active with trails but not with recreation areas. The dam and the railroad bridge should be developed with pedestrian and bike trails. The trail on the south side of the Nashua River should be improved with additional connections to an extended Park Street and selective clearing of trees and shrubbery.

The large parking lot between Canal Street and the Nashua River should be improved to be more appropriate for a riverfront and park setting. A parking lot will remain for BAE Systems and other businesses along Canal Street and Railroad Square. A pedestrian bridge built atop the existing dam would connect this parking resource to the south side of the River - particularly to the proposed Performing Art Center at 14 Court Street. The parking lot could be shared by park users on weekends. A trail head for the




*Illustrative Plan of Riverfront East Park (top)*

*Existing section of north bank of Nashua River (middle)*

*Proposed section of north bank of Nashua River (bottom)*

park system and regional trail system should be developed at this location.

The rail right-of-way along the north side of the Nashua River can be utilized for a trail connection between the bridge and Riverfront West park, but can also be used as a connection between Railroad Square and a future commuter rail station, proposed to be located in the vicinity of East Hollis Street near the Merrimack River. This rail line is currently active (with extremely light use) providing rail access to towns west of Nashua. redevelopment of the rail line and areas around the rail line would have to be consistent with continued use of the rail line.

### Nashua Public Library and The Performing Arts Center

The Nashua Public Library is a valuable resource for the City. It is the most active library in northern New England. As an important cultural resource, however, it suffers from inaccessibility and a lack of defined parking. The Master Plan proposes an extension of Park Street between 14 Court Street and the Library along the riverfront to Temple Street. This new road will provide a common front door and entry sequence for both the Library and 14 Court Street, at the terminus of the Spring Street Institutional and Cultural Spine.

14 Court Street should be redeveloped as the proposed Performing Arts Center. Whereas there are no high quality facilities for Performing Arts in Nashua, the nearby cities of Portsmouth, Keene, and Manchester have quality venues for audiences of approximately 850.

There is a market in Nashua for a 400 seat facility. However this size could increase anywhere from 400 to 1000 seats if justified by the market, community interest, funding, and the needs of performance groups within the City.

The construction of a facility of this size was analyzed in depth in a previous Performing Arts Feasibility Study. The issues surrounding this cultural development are discussed in the Market Study Appendix of this report. The 14 Court Street location for the Performing Arts Center is recommended by both the previous study and this Master Plan, however, is agreed upon between the Feasibility Study and this Master Plan, as an appropriately prominent site within walking distance of Main Street.

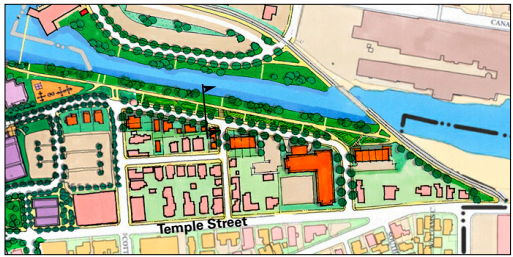
Parking resources will need to be created for a new Performing Arts Center.


*Illustrative Plan of the proposed street and plaza between the Performing Arts Center and Nashua Public Library*

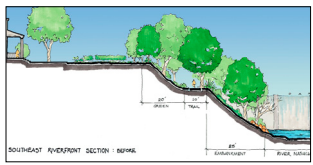
A new parking garage may have to be built to support this facility. A site along Spring Street, just south of Temple Street, is recommended. The BAE Systems parking lot, located on the north side of the river should be considered a parking resource for the Performing Arts Center. If the dam structure is modified to contain a pedestrian walk, the BAE Parking lot will be less than a five minute walk from the Performing Art Center.

### Temple Street Neighborhood

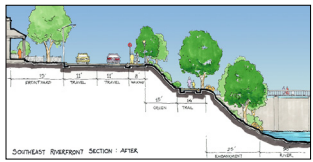
The Temple Street neighborhood should be extended to include new housing along an extended Park Street. The new housing would overlook the Riverfront East trail and park. As Park Street is extended along the river to Temple Street, a site for a new 100-unit senior/elderly building is proposed. Creating a new riverfront drive will a great new address and will be an important component to improving visibility and visitability to the park.




*Illustrative plan of Riverfront East (top)*




*Existing section of south bank of Nashua River (middle)*




*Proposed section of south bank of Nashua River (bottom)*

*Existing rail right of way behind Cattleman's (top)*

*Proposed rail right of way, redevelopment and trail connection. (bottom)*

# IV Railroad Square



RAILROAD SQUARE IS AN urban design landmark located at the confluence of four regional arterials. With four high-volume arterials converging into a small area bound on one side by water, Railroad Square performs admirably, as it delicately balances the heavy impacts of regional through-traffic on all four arterials with an environment that is surprisingly pedestrian-friendly. The challenge of Railroad Square will be to establish it as Main Street's northernmost retail node, while maintaining its status as an historic pedestrian-friendly place.

*Railroad Square*

### Development Opportunities

Most of the buildings on Railroad Square are worthy of preservation. While several buildings may be renovated, one site is identified for new construction. It is important that new construction as well as renovation adhere to strict architectural design guidelines, based on Nashua's historic architectural traditions.

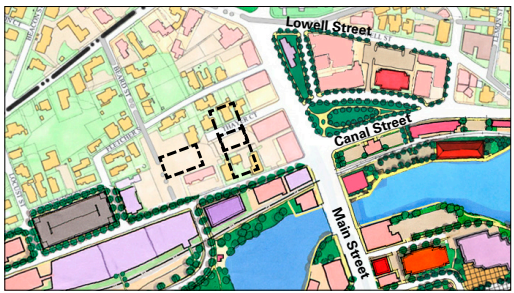
The most important renovation project will be the Laton Hotel. Specifically, the striking double-level porch should be restored

In order for Railroad Square to realize its potential as Main Street's northernmost retail node, additional parking resources will be required. The Master Plan identifies four possible locations for parking structures that could serve the businesses at Railroad Square, as well as other uses.

### Veterans Park

If a new parking structure is built for Railroad Square businesses, the parking lot defining the north edge of Deschene's should be rebuilt as a through lane with on-street parking. It should be built as narrow as possible to discourage cut-through traffic, yet define the park more clearly and publicly.

**Laton Hotel**
*The full front porch of the Laton Hotel should be restored to its original elegance.*

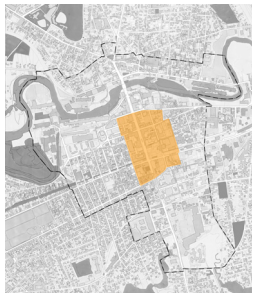



**Riverfront West and Railroad Square Parking**
*Four potential sites for a parking structure are identified (as dotted boxes). The structure must serve both the redevelopment of the Nashua Corporation buildings, as well as Railroad Square.*

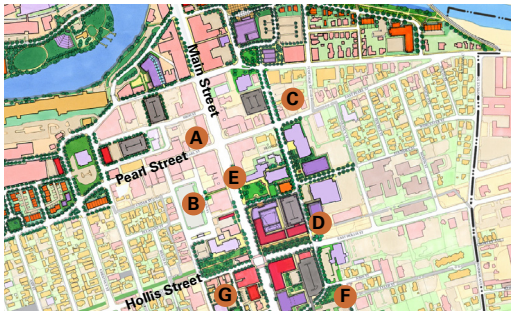
# v Main Street North



MAIN STREET NORTH IS healthy. Also referred to as "walking Main Street", there are almost no retail vacancies, sidewalks are active, and there is a vibrant mix of retail, offices and restaurants. Behind Main Street on both sides, however, significant attention is required. The seam between the neighborhoods and Main Street North is ragged. Spring Street and Elm Street are characterized by disinvestment, surface parking lots, and unpaired and confusing one-way streets.

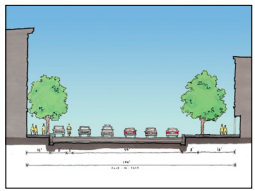


*Main Street North*




**Main Street North**

**A** *Main Street North Streetscaping*
**B** *Relocation of Joanne's Kitchen*
**C** *Spring Street Institutional Spine*
**D** *Citizen's Bank site*
**E** *New Nashua Commons*
**F** *SENHMC expansion*
**G** *Redevelopment of existing buildings*



*Main Street North*

## Streetscaping

Maintenance and upgrades to the streetscape of Main Street is critical. Begun in the early 1980's, the streetscape program has been a great success. The comfortably wide sidewalks, warm red bricks, and the canopy of street trees create a pedestrian environment that has been instrumental in Main Street's resurgence over the past 15 years. However, some sidewalk bricks have been dislodged and many of the street furnishings are either historically inappropriate, poorly located, or in general disrepair.

Basic upkeep and selective improvements to the streetscape on Main Street North are as critical today as the introduction of these standards 20 years ago. If the public sector falls behind in its responsibility, the private sector will not

re-invest. The Master Plan therefore recommends pursuing a responsible maintenance and upgrade program for streetscaping on Main Street North as an early action item for the City. At a minimum, "responsible maintenance" should include annual inspection of sidewalk conditions following the spring thaw and immediate replacement of damaged pavers. In addition, the City should consider utilizing a more delicate sidewalk sweeper, one that does not damage the pavers as it cleans them.

**Benches**

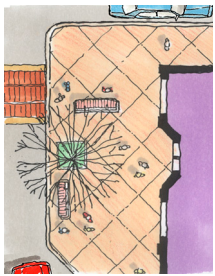
*Several benches along Main Street are poorly located. Benches that face traffic or are located in the middle of sidewalks are rarely used. Where possible, benches should either be paired, facing each other, or they should be located with their backs to storefronts.*

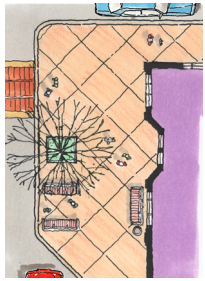
*Pavers and grates on Main Street in need of replacement*

**Diagrams**

*Inappropriate bench location (below left)*

*Appropriate bench location (below right)*





### Pedestrian Connectivity

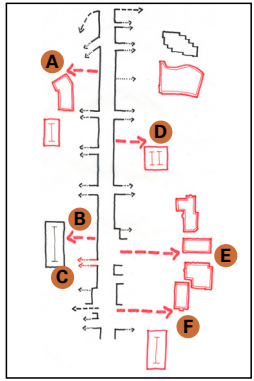
The Library Walk is a great success. It provides pedestrian access through Nashua's long blocks to destinations located one block behind Main Street. More such connections are required in order to connect and stimulate investment along Spring and Elm Streets.

The Master Plan recommends creating five additional through-block pedestrian connections: two on the interior of buildings, and three exterior. The exterior pedestrian paths should be public, well-lit, and modeled after the successful Library Walk. The interior paths require partnerships with private building owners. They should be integrated with the interior circulation through a lobby or public corridor.

### Hollis and Main Street Intersection: The Region's 100% Corner

There is no more important intersection to redevelop in Nashua than the intersection of Hollis and Main Streets. The intersection is the region's "100% corner," as it creates gateways to Main Street from the east and west and south.

All four corners of this intersection are currently underutilized and underperforming. In a City with limited available land and relatively low-scale buildings, three of the four corners present opportunities to add significant square footage to the Downtown inventory of office, retail, institutional, and cultural space without creating an inappropriately sized building. Downtown's largest new buildings should be sited at




**A** *Through an existing building*
**B** *In place of the relocated Joanne's Kitchen*
**C** *A new lane beside relocated parking*
**D** *Along side of the church*
**E** *Through new Downtown common*
**F** *An extension of the rail trail*

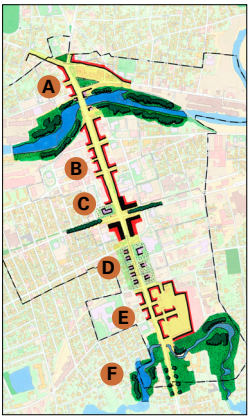
**New Pedestrian Connections**
*Several new pedestrian connections (similar to Library Walk and shown in red) should be created to improve the permeability of Main Street's long blocks.*

this intersection. A series of distinct, 4- to 6-story, mixed-use buildings wold create a center to the Downtown. They buildings would anchor both ends of Main Street by creating a strong center. and transform an anonymous intersection into the region's symbolic heart.

### Citizen's Bank Site

The most important site at Nashua's 100% intersection is the northeast corner of Hollis and Main Streets - commonly referred to as the Citizen's Bank site. This site has an address on two of the busiest arterials in Nashua (Main Street and Hollis) and is a gateway to the Downtown. Additionally, with the Main Street Marketplace under reconstruction, it is the largest remaining developable site fronting Main Street. The long term redevelopment of the Citizen's Bank site must establish the standard for all other development in Nashua because it is a front door to the region. It should leave a positive legacy for years to come.

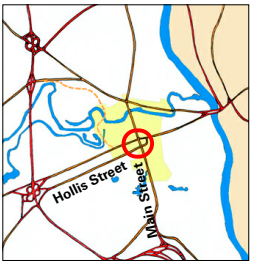
In December 2002, Citizen's Bank secured approval for plans to build a single story bank with drive through facilities. This building should be considered an interim solution for this important



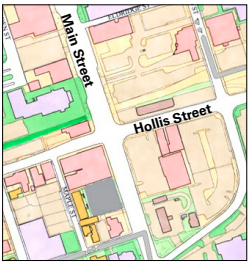

**Main Street as a Series of Rooms**

*The entire length of Main Street should be designed as a series of rooms and experiences, not as a single monolithic avenue.*

**A** *Railroad Square*
**B** *Main Street North*
**C** *100% Corner: Hollis Main Street Intersection*
**D** *Transitional area: Hollis to Otterson Streets*
**E** *Secondary retail node: Main Street marketplace*
**F** *Southern Gateway: Salmon Brook*




*Hollis and Main Street: The region's 100% Corner*




*The intersection of Hollis and Main Streets as it exists today: an under-developed intersection dominated by high volumes of through traffic.*

site. When market forces dictate redevelopment of the site, the City should partner with Citizen's bank to create a legacy project.

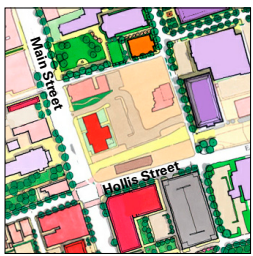
The public outreach process and the market study both conclude that this site would be best developed as a mix of uses, including a ground floor bank, and anchored by an institutional use such as a a downtown campus for an area college. Such a use would bring a diverse group of people into the area at all hours, enforcing the desire of developing Nashua as a "24-hour city".

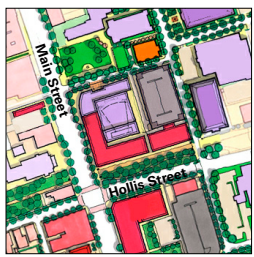
As an educational building, classrooms would occupy the upper floors of the buildings with Main Street retail at the ground level. This configuration allows for active, pedestrian-oriented uses on the street to add to the already healthy street-life on Main Street North. Also, providing for retail uses on the ground level allows for businesses and restaurants to be open and active after office hours.

The site north of the Citizen's Bank site can also be integrated into an amenity for Main Street. The potential relocation of Saint Patrick's gymnasium to Spring Street provides a proper civic greenspace for the City of Nashua. The desire for outdoor, public space is great in the City, and this resource would provide a new "Commons" for Nashua.

### Southeast Corner of Hollis Street and Main Street

To truly create a 100% corner at Hollis and Main, the southeast corner of the intersection should also be a redevelopment opportunity. At present, this site houses a service station, a drugstore, a few miscellaneous businesses and restaurants, and surface parking for Southeast New Hampshire Medical Center (SENHMC). Constitution Plaza occupies the other corner of the site, that of Main and Kinsley Streets, though few would know it is there amidst the uncoordinated land uses. The proposed building configurations will not only define the corner of Hollis and Main Streets as a gateway, but with ground floor retail uses they will encourage pedestrian-oriented street-life.



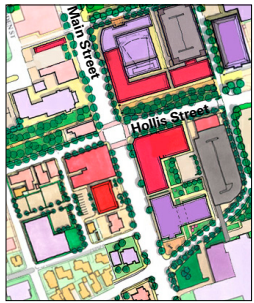




*Citizen's Bank Site, Short Term Vision: A bank with a drive through facility. (left)*

*Citizen's Bank Site, Long Term Vision: Redevelopment as an Educational Complex with ground floor retail and Main Street Commons (right)*

The proposed buildings would have retail businesses at street level with offices above. The offices could be used by the hospital, or physicians offices, or other businesses seeking office space in the heart of Downtown.

At the easternmost part of the block, a parking garage is proposed to accommodate current parking needs for SENHMC as well as addressing parking requirements of other uses on the block. And most importantly, Constitution Plaza will be surrounded by public uses to provide a more defined, proper environment for community gathering.




*Illustrative Plan of a redeveloped Hollis and Main Street intersection*

### Parking Strategy

Easy access to parking was identified by many as a problem in Downtown Nashua. Currently, there are approximately 3,500 parking spaces and 850,000 square feet of retail/office/commercial space in Downtown. This is over 4 spaces per 1000 square feet - a more than adequate supply for an downtown that aspires to be pedestrian friendly, mixed use, dense and urban so supply is not the problem.

Analysis and public testimony support the fact that there is not a shortage of parking, but rather that the existing parking supply is not well-managed, coordinated or visible. Therefore, simply providing more parking would not only fail to solve the parking problem, but it would conceivably create additional problems in Downtown.

Parking issues should be addressed on two fronts. First, the current parking resources should be better organized and managed. Second, new parking should be carefully and selectively added to proper

*Existing conditions at Hollis Street and Main Street*

*Proposed redevelopment of Hollis Street and Main Street*

locations when it is needed. Determination of need should consider issues such as the deleterious effect of excess parking, the potential impacts on surrounding properties, and the need to create a dense unique urban environment for Downtown.

### Parking Management

Currently the 3,500 parking spaces downtown are scattered throughout downtown in private and public lots, large and small lots, metered and free lots, on streets, and in public and private structures. Existing parking resources must be more effectively managed. This should be a priority, initially, over building more spaces.

As an inexpensive first step, the City should implement a wayfinding and signage system to help visitors to Downtown have better access to the City's parking supply. In addition, parking lots and sidewalks should be designed with comfortable pathways, trees, and lighting in order to maximize their use.

A second step should be to organize and manage the current parking space - both public and private. Metered spaces should be used for short-term parking. They should be the most expensive cost to park per hour, and have a limit of two hours. Because they are the most accessible and important to retail, the metered spaces should encourage a high turnover of users.

The parking garages should be used by employees and for longer-term parking. Upper floors of garages, the least convenient spaces, should be reserved for employees who park all day.. They can be leased out to business owners, thereby freeing up their on-site spaces and street spaces for customers. Lower levels of garages should be used for both long term and short term parking.

### Shared Parking and Partnerships

The City should enter into discussions with owners of large parking lots and parking structures (SENHMC, BAE Systems, Indian Head Plaza, etc) in order to allow these facilities to be used at "non peak" times.

For example, the Performing Arts Center (PAC) may require very little new parking if the unused evening capacity of the BAE parking lot (connected to the PAC with a walkway atop the dam) and the Indian Head Plaza are utilized. Both are within a five minute walk of the proposed PAC.

### Surface Parking

Limited surface parking located on street or in small lots is important for retailers in Downtown Nashua. The spaces are easy to use, have a rapid turnover, and are readily accessible in small lots, behind buildings or mid-block. They lots should be well-designed and have clear pedestrian connections to sidewalks and paths.

Many of downtown Nashua's parking spaces are scattered throughout the downtown in small and large lots. The dozens of small parking lots provide an efficiency and efficacy that belies their size. Many smaller lots, tucked away and

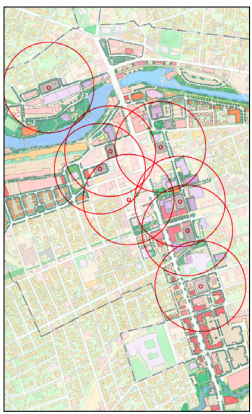
behind buildings, are more effective and efficient than fewer larger lots, but the location and availability may be difficult to discern for visitors.

On-street parking should be introduced wherever possible. If peak hour traffic flow is an issue, parking can be prohibited during rush hours. Cars parked on the street provide convenient short-term parking as well as acting as a traffic calming barrier between cars and pedestrians.

### Parking Garages

No new parking garages are immediately needed. There is adequate parking to serve today's inventory of occupied commercial/office/retail space as well as to absorb the current vacancies (approximately 200,000 sq..ft. of commercial/office/retail space). However, implementation of the Master Plan will further intensify downtown uses and necessitate the conversion of some surface lots to structured lots. The Master Plan proposes five potential sites for parking garages. These new parking garages, combined with the three existing garages will adequately serve downtown upon build-out.The proposed locations will correspond with places where there is a current parking deficit, or where new development will generate future parking demand. With two garages currently located on the west side of Main Street, priority should be given to a new structure on the east side of Main Street. Any new parking facility should be matched with a private sector initiative. Parking should be shared to balance the daytime and evening uses.

**Parking Strategy**
*Upon completion of the proposed garages, the Downtown core will be well served with parking, as denoted by five minute walking radii. (left)*



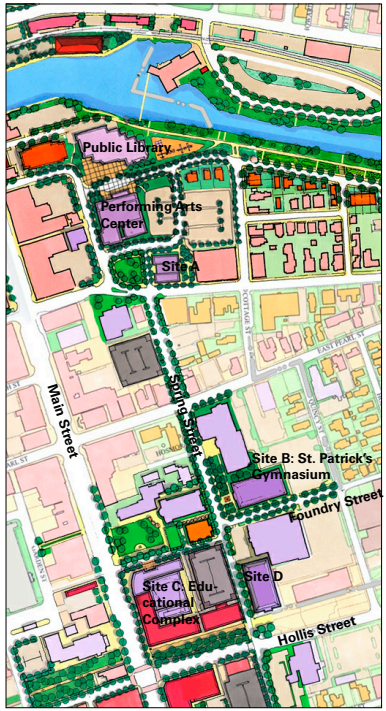
*A well-defined parking lot in the heart of Lowell, Massachusetts illustrates that small, surface parking areas can be tucked in and around buildings and landscaped creating a pleasant street wall. (right)*

### Spring Street Institutional Spine

The Master Plan proposes Spring Street as an institutional spine. Currently several public buildings are located along Spring Street. However, they are not connected to each other or related to Main Street or the neighborhoods.

A streetscaping program will create an appropriate setting for the five public buildings located on Spring Street.

Also, four additional sites along Spring Street have been identified for public buildings. One of the sites could be used for the relocation of Saint Patrick's Gymnasium from Main Street. Moving the gymnasium to this site maintains the facility's adjacency to the parish but rebuilds it on a more appropriate site and frees up the Main Street site for a town green, or Commons.

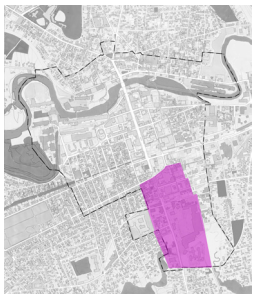



**Spring Street Institutional Spine**
*Anchored on the north by the Performing Arts Center, an improved Spring Street is an ideal address for civic and public buildings.*

# VI Main Street South

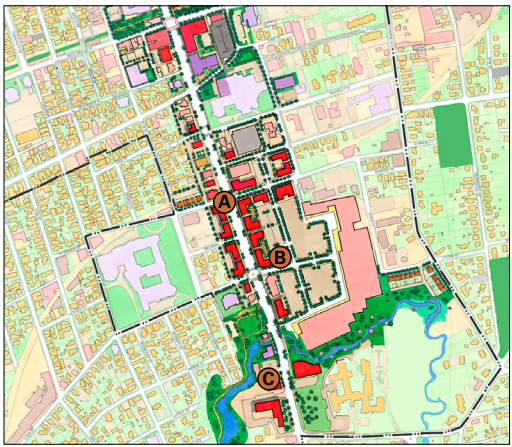


MAIN STREET SOUTH – or "Driving Main Street" – stands in sharp contrast to Main Street North or "Walking Main Street." Main Street South has an exceedingly wide road, a large number of auto-dependent uses, and the absence of an intact historic fabric. Historically, Main Street South was residential, not commercial. However, over time, as traffic volumes increased, Downtown commercial uses grew south towards Salmon Brook. A few grand houses and apartment buildings still exist; however, most have been demolished. Main Street South was formerly identified by Salmon Brook and its wetlands. However, the wetlands have since been filled and the stream was covered and culverted by the Globe Plaza (now Main Street Marketplace) in the 1960's.



*Main Street South*

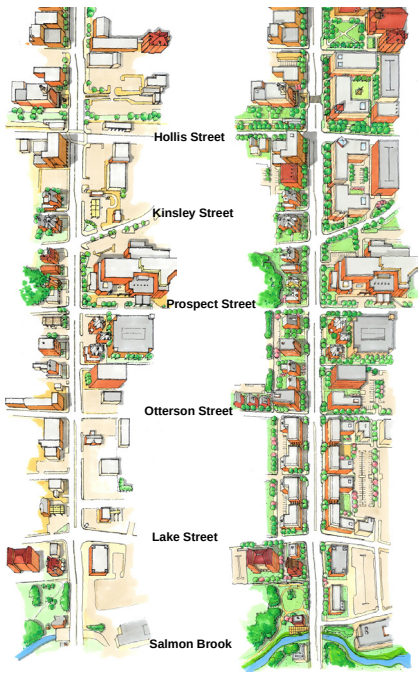
Main Street South can become an important part of the overall Downtown experience, its retail strategy, and its circulation and park system. The half-mile length of Main Street South should be developed as a series of spatial experiences varying one's perception of the long straight road, not as a single monolithic avenue. The initiatives contained in the following pages develop Main Street South as a progression of unique places with a mix of uses.




**Main Street South**
**A** *Streetscape program*
**B** *Redevelopment sites*
**C** *Salmon Brook Park*

### Streetscape Program

The Master Plan recommends the City undertake a comprehensive streetscape and road improvement program for Main Street between Hollis Street and Allds Street. Creating a high quality pedestrian environment does not require major traffic flow modifications. The Master Plan proposes preserving the current lane configuration. The moving and turning lanes that exist today, will remain. However, the curb should be moved east or west 8' to create on-street parking lanes wherever possible. The parking would be set between bulb-outs at the corners in order to minimize the pedestrian crossing distance of Main Street. Easements or acquisition of prop-

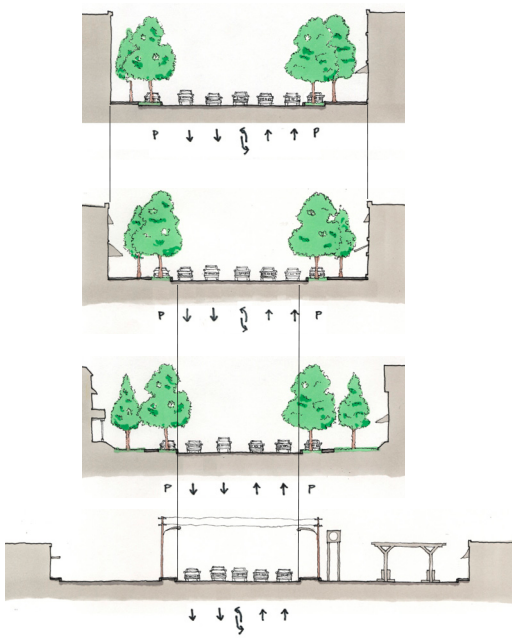



**Main Street South**
*Existing (left)*

*Proposed (right)*

erty would be required in front of most properties to create sidewalks and a planting zone. Buildings between Otterson and Hollis should be set back approximately 15' the sidewalk to preserve the residential/institutional fabric. Buildings between Otterson and Salmon Brook should be built to the sidewalk.

The streetscaping program will improve the overall pedestrian and vehicular experience of Main Street South. A new streetscape program should locate utilities underground in accessible trenches. In addition, the streetscape should provide generous street trees, low level pedestrian scaled lighting, high level street lighting, textured (possibly brick, extended from Main Street North) sidewalks and crosswalks. The streetscape should be designed to calm traffic by cre-



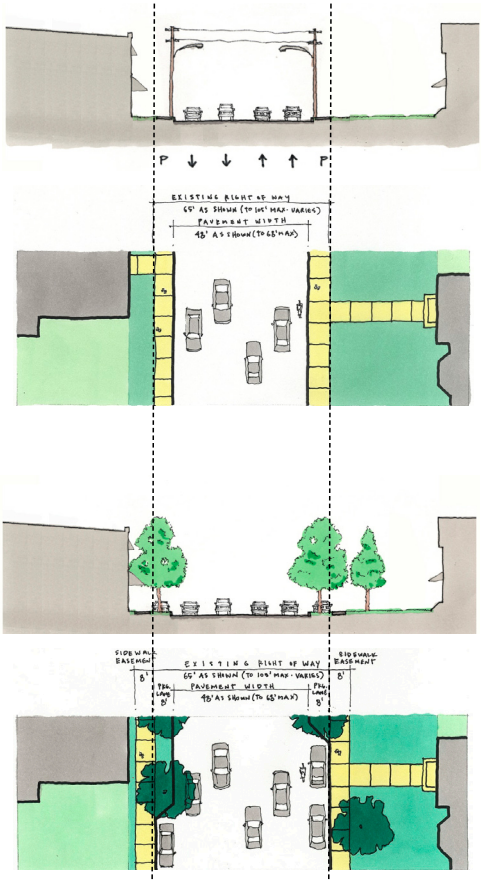
**Street Sections**

*Existing Main Street North, between Hollis Street and the Nashua River (top)*

*Proposed Section for Main Street South between Salmon Brook and Otterson Street (second)*

*Proposed Section for Main Street South between Hollis Street and Otterson Street (third)*

*Existing Section of Main Street South between Otterson and Salmon Brook (bottom)*



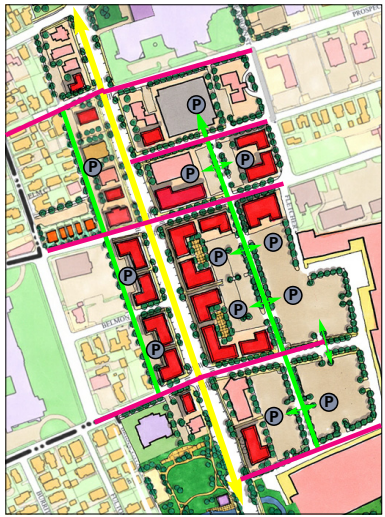

**Existing Conditions of Main Street South:**
*Sidewalks are located directly adjacent to moving lanes of traffic. The lack of street trees and presence of overhead utilities creates a dangerous and unattractive pedestrian environment.*
*(top two images)*

**Proposed Plan and Section for Main Street South:**
*The moving lanes of traffic remain unchanged. Parking bays are created, street trees are planted. A new sidewalk is constructed on private property. No building demolition is required.*
*(bottom two images)*

ating visual interest and subtle cues to drivers that Main Street is an environment that balances the needs of automobiles and pedestrians. All street furnishings (benches, light poles, trash receptacles) should be coordinated through a carefully selected palate of materials and colors.

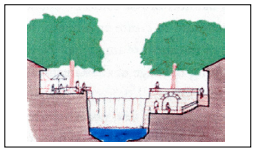
### Circulation and Parking

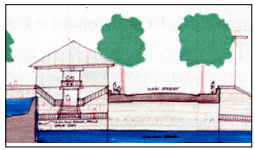
The Master Plan recommends improved commercial circulation by creating rear lanes to access most of the properties along Main Street and installing traffic signals at key cross streets. The rear lanes will provide parallel access to Main Street. Traffic destined for establishments on Main Street South will access the properties at controlled intersections and rear lanes as opposed to via curb cuts directly on Main Street. In addition, a rear lane allows local traffic travelling from one establishment to another on




**Circulation and Parking**

*Regional through traffic on Main Street (shown in yellow) will be aided by the reduction of local traffic and curb cuts from Main Street. The network of cross streets (shown in magenta) and parallel lanes (shown in green) provide local access to parking and service.*






*Section A:*
*Section across Salmon Brook : dam and turbine are restored as an historic industrial remnant and public sculpture. (top left)*

*Section B*
*Section through Main Street: a pedestrian underpass under Main Street is created connecting Salmon Brook Park to Main Street Market Place. (top right)*

*(section drawings from Salmon Brook Charette)*

*The reconfigured park celebrates and preserved this part of Nashua's early heritage and development (bottom)*

Main Street South to avoid Main Street altogether. By removing as much local traffic and curb cut access from Main Street as possible, Main Street can function more effectively as a regional through route.

### Salmon Brook Park

Located south of Main Street Marketplace, Salmon Brook Park is the southern Gateway to Downtown. The park can create a "green" gateway.

Studies and a public design charette for Salmon Brook Park have explored the possibility of daylighting the culverted brook south of the Main Street Marketplace and creating a pedestrian underpass under Main Street. Additionally, the park would restore and stabilize remnant historic industrial structures where a dam and turbine once stood. Implementation of this plan will require a partnership with the private property owner.

### Redevelopment Opportunities

Main Street South presents many opportunities for redevelopment. Most are located between Otterson and Salmon Brook. With the exception of a few of the grand residences between Hollis and Otterson, most of the buildings are either disposable, obsolete, or of no historic value. Over the next ten years, it is likely that many of these properties will be redeveloped. The Master Plan recommends this redevelopment occur incre-

mentally and be primarily driven by the private sector. A public streetscape program is recommended however wholesale public sector acquisition and redevelopment is not necessary.

In sum, the Master Plan identifies approximately 10 to 15 sites for private redevelopment. Most of the sites on Man Street South are located at the proposed retail node between Otterson and Salmon Brook Park. With the redevelopment of the Main Street Marketplace, this retail node will complement both the form and types of retail on Main Street North. Storefront buildings would define the street and sidewalks. Overall, this retail node can absorb between 50,000 and 75,000 additional square feet of retail, further widening the array of Downtown businesses.

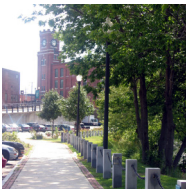
Retail sites along Main Street South should redevelop according to the following principles:

- a build-to line should be established at the back of the sidewalk, and a building's frontage must occupy at least 60 percent of this frontage line
- parking must be located behind the building; parking may be located in a 60' wide lot beside the building provided it is adequately screened from the sidewalk and street.
- buildings must have windows and activities that animate the sidewalk; at least 50 percent of a building's facade on Main Street must have windows and ground floor glass doors opening onto the sidewalk.
- primary entrances must face Main Street South
- in order to minimize parking requirements and encourage development, parking should be shared between adjoining properties; a parking maximum of one space per 4000 square feet should be enforced
- properties must be developed between .25 FAR and .5 FAR (FAR stands for "floor-area-ratio", meaning the ratio of the building's floor area to the overall area of its site).
- buildings must be a minimum of 2 to 3 stories in height

*Existing*
*Main Street South*
*(top)*

*Proposed*
*Main Street South*
*(bottom)*

# Frameworks



# 1 Streets: Access and Connectivity



IN GREAT CITIES STREETS are more than a means of simply moving traffic. Streets are just one of the many components creating the public realm.

This Master Plan proposes a new framework of streets and blocks for Downtown Nashua. The framework includes converting one-way streets to two-way streets, improved streetscaping, and alignments of new streets.

### Conversion of One-Way Streets to Two-Way Streets

Many of the streets in Downtown Nashua were converted to one-way movement after World War II as a means of moving higher volumes of traffic through Downtown. Typically streets were converted in pairs, one in each direction (such as Kinsley and Hollis or Pearl and Factory). However, some are "orphans"--that is, they are not paired.

The public outreach process uncovered a variety of opinions, both negative and positive, about one-way streets. While they do move more traffic, there are several negative impacts:

- faster traffic, therefore a less pleasant pedestrian experience
- confusion and frustration for drivers who cannot move through Downtown based on intuition
- needlessly additional vehicle miles due to restricted movements and re-routing
- less desirable retail environment because businesses get exposure to traffic during either the morning or afternoon commute, but not both
- diminished access to parking and other destinations because of restricted movements
- reliance on wayfinding and signage because driving is no longer intuitive.

For these reasons, the Master Plan recommends converting as many one-way roads to two-way as possible. Doing so, however, is more complicated than simply removing the one-way sign. Typically, slight reconstruction of the road and intersection, as well as new traffic signals are required. Because of the complexity of converting streets from one-way to two, the Master Plan recommends a phased sequence of conversions. All streets have been categorized. A phased conversion is rec-

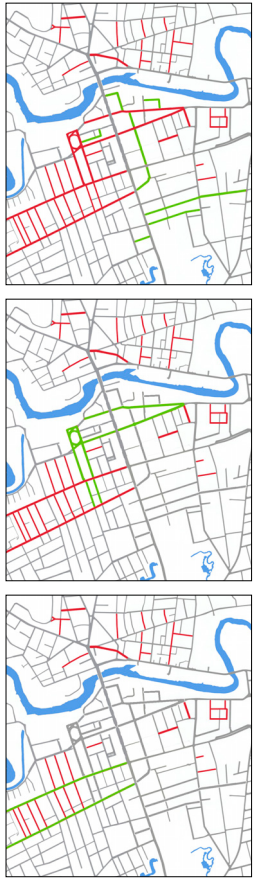
ommended beginning with those streets that are the most simple to convert (the "orphans") because they are not paired with another one-way street. Streets were categorized as follows:

- streets that are less than 30' wide and are too narrow to convert to two-way movement with on-street parking
- streets that can be easily converted because they are wider than 30' and are not paired with a street in the opposite direction
- streets that are paired but can be converted with signalization improvements
- lowest priority streets whose conversion is most complicated and therefore require most study.

A more detailed study of one way street conversions is recommended as an early action item in the Implementation Section  This study should examine street widths, land uses, social / cultural contexts, impact of potential loss of on street parking and costs.

### Broad Street Parkway

One of the charges of the Master Plan process was to examine the existing plans for the Broad Street Parkway and make recommendations for revisions if necessary to better serve the Downtown and the neighborhoods.



**Tier One Conversions:**
*(top)*
*Unpaired streets greater than 30 feet wide shown in green*
*Remaining one-way streets are shown in red.*

**Tier Two Conversions:**
*(middle)*
*Paired streets with sufficient width and capacity shown in green. Remaining one-way streets are shown in red.*

**Tier Three Conversions:**
*(bottom)*
*Paired arterials that require further study shown in green.*
*Remaining one way streets shown in red.*

To this end, the planning team reviewed and analyzed the current proposal, interviewed the community development staff, public works staff, and the regional planning commission staff, conducted a field examination, and applied national experience from other similar projects to the design of the Broad Street Parkway.

### Broad Street Parkway: Existing Proposal

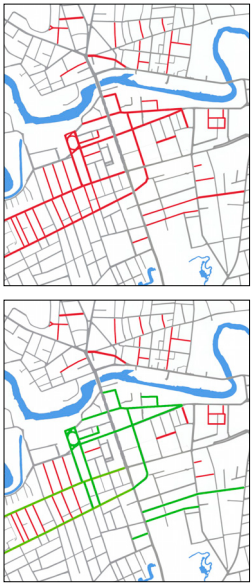
The existing proposal for the Broad Street Parkway calls for a four-lane arterial highway, most of it divided by a center median, extending a distance of 1.7 miles, from a northern terminus at Broad Street to a southern terminus on Hollis Street. In addition to its two terminus intersections (Broad Street and Hollis Street), the proposed parkway would have three other intersections: at a connection to a Sargent Avenue extension, in the Millyard south of the Nashua River, and at Ledge Street just to the south of the Millyard. Auxiliary lanes (left-turn lanes and, in some instances, right turn lanes) would be present at all intersections.

The design speed of the proposed Broad Street Parkway is 40-50 miles per hour, typical of a multi-lane suburban arterial highway. The Parkway is a limited access roadway, with no fronting properties having access to the road. Access to adjacent properties is gained through the three internal intersections and the two terminus intersections.

### Strengths and Challenges

The master plan team recognized the two underlying strengths of the current Broad Street proposal:

- It adds to the arterial street network. Adding new street network is always preferable to the alternate action of widening the existing street network.
- It adds new street network in perhaps the most useful alignment in Nashua: i.e., north/south across the Nashua River, thereby creating a par-



**Existing One Way Streets**
*(top)*
*Current inventory of all one-way streets shown in red*

**Proposed Conversions**
*(bottom)*
*Through an incremental process, 20 of the 47 one-way streets can be converted. Converted streets are shown in red, remaining one-way streets are shown in red.*

allel alternate route to the Main Street crossing of the Nashua River, one of the most problematical traffic "bottlenecks" in the City.

- The proposed Parkway provides a large increment of new access to the Millyard district, enabling travel between the Millyard and the north side of the Nashua River without requiring the use of Main Street.

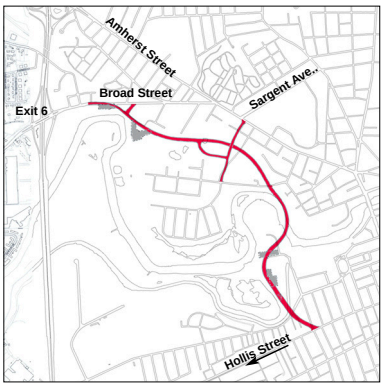
However the Master Plan team developed an alternative which better meets the goals of the City and Downtown.

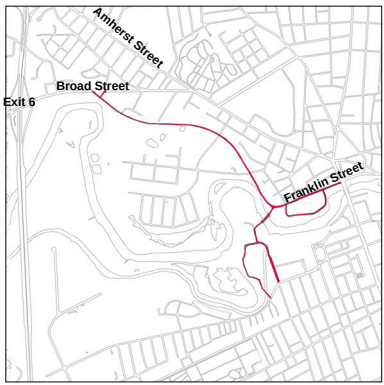
Although in agreement with the fundamental premises of the Broad Street Parkway, the Master Plan team identified several challenges with the current design as proposed:

- **Road Type** A limited access road is fundamentally at odds with the character of Nashua, and indeed with cities in general. Limited access roads are most appropriate where mobility – higher speed travel over longer distance – is paramount. In contrast, the primary purpose of arterial streets within the city is access, i.e. distribution to as many intersecting streets and fronting properties as possible, and the provision of frequent opportunities for pedestrian crossings. The limited access feature of the proposed Broad Street Parkway, therefore, is fundamentally at odds with the existing character of Nashua streets, and with the desired character for new streets within the system.
- **Design Speed** The proposed Broad Street Parkway has a design speed of 40-50 miles per hour. This high

**Current Broad Street Parkway Existing Proposal** *(bottom left)*
*The proposal provides a high-speed link between Broad Street and the Millyard, but does little for regional through-traffic.*

**Preferred Alternative for the Broad Street Connector** *(bottom right)*
*The preferred alternative will provide access to redevelopment properties and will improve congestion at Railroad Square created by regional through traffic.*

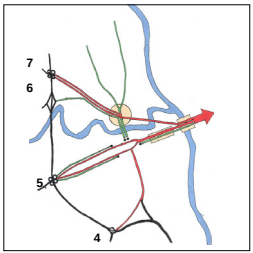


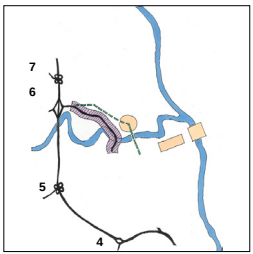
design speed is incompatible with the densely developed urban fabric (or what should be such fabric) in the road corridor. Design speeds in the 40-50 miles per hour range are appropriate for suburban arterials, in which mobility is the highest consideration. For urban streets for which access and urban street values are the primary consideration, design speeds of around half this amount (i.e., 25 to 30 miles-per-hour) are more appropriate.

- **Number of Lanes** Four through lanes of traffic, as proposed in the current Broad Street Parkway design, are far in excess of any need likely to be generated by even the most optimistic of downtown growth scenarios. A two-lane roadway (one lane in each direction) is, on the other hand, fully adequate for all reasonable projections of downtown growth. For example, a two-lane roadway would accommodate downtown growth of 1.25 million square feet of new shopping, or 1.74 million square feet of new office, or 6,200 new downtown dwelling units. These supportable growths, or combinations of them, are greatly in excess of any downtown growth projections.

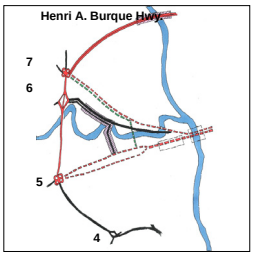
  A cross section with four through lanes translates to a cross section of six lanes at most intersections, and seven lanes at the "worst case" at Ledge Street. Intersection widths of this type are not only visually blight-




**Diagnosis**
*(top)*
*Traffic from Exits 6 and 7 is funnelled through a dog-leg at Railroad Square and a single Merrimack River crossing on East Hollis Street.*



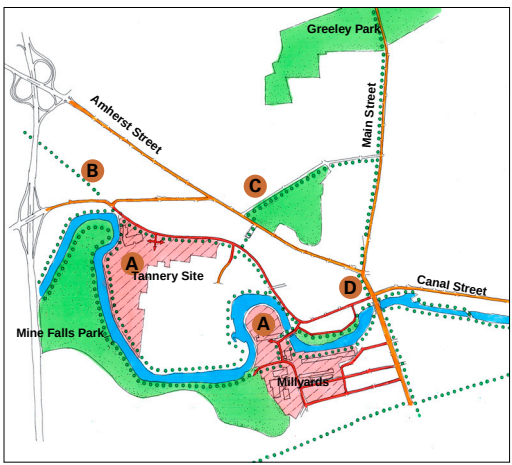

**Current Broad Street Parkway Proposal**
*(middle)*
*Proposed roadway serves only Exit 6 traffic to the Millyard. Much traffic is still funnelled through Railroad Square and the single Merrimack River crossing.*




**Alternative Proposal Broad Street Parkway**
*(bottom)*
*Exit 7 traffic takes the Henri A. Burque Highway across the Merrimack River on a new bridge. Exit 6 traffic crosses Railroad Square in a "through-movement."*

ing and out of character with the City of Nashua, but they are inefficient for traffic operations, and hostile to pedestrian and bicycle travel.

- **Lack of Address Value** The proposed limited access feature on the proposed Parkway design means that fronting properties cannot have an "address" on the Parkway. At best, properties can appear to front on the Parkway, but must be reached from side streets or parallel "frontage roads." The proposed limited access feature of the Parkway, therefore, will prevent the Parkway from ever becoming an "armature" of development in Nashua. Failure to realize this potential is particularly disappointing, given the currently undeveloped state of two prime developable areas through which the corridor passes: (1) the Millyard south of the Nashua River and (2) the currently undeveloped land on the south side of the corridor near its western terminus at Broad Street.
- **Lack of East/West Street Connection** Although the proposed Broad Street Parkway design accomplishes the all-important north/south connection across the Nashua River, it does little to provide an additional east/west connection on the north side of the River. Such a connection




**Broad Street Parkway: "An armature for everything"**
*If designed well, the road can provide (**A**) access to redevelopment parcels, (**B**) connections to a regional trail system, (**C**) an extension of a local trail system, and (**D**) improvements to signal operations at Railroad Square.*

would be highly valuable in redirecting east/west traffic now on Amherst Street through Railroad Square to other locations (most obviously, to Franklin Street, thereby crossing Main Street away from Railroad Square).

- **Lack of Local Street Connections** To the south of the Nashua River (i.e., in the Millyard and in the Hollis Street area), the Parkway terminates in a dense network of small local streets or street-like spaces in the Millyard and the Tree Streets Neighborhood. Rather than weaving the Parkway into these streets, however, the proposed design obliterates them, connecting only at one existing street (Ledge Street) with a seven-lane cross section, and at a large new single intersection (five lane approaches) in the Millyard.
- **Through Trips** Although a stated purpose of the proposed Broad Street Parkway is the relief of through traffic (i.e., traffic with neither origin nor destination in Nashua), the road as configured does not offer an impressive source of relief. The major through movements within Nashua are not fundamentally north/south movements, but rather east/west movements, primarily between interchanges 5, 6 and 7 of the Everett Turnpike and the single crossing (Hollis Street) of the Merrimack River. The currently proposed configuration of the Broad Street Parkway rearranges some of these movements, particularly the movements between Everett Turnpike interchanges 6 and 7 and the Hollis Street crossing of the Merrimack River. The proposed Parkway will permit the rerouting of these movements (or some of them) away from the congested multi-leg intersection at Railroad Square, and redirect them toward the new north/south river crossing and then onto Hollis Street and Kinsley Street. This rerouting of traffic, however, may not have a large benefit, since the same volume of east/west traffic would still appear at the critical bottleneck location at the Hollis Street crossing of the Merrimack River.
- **Cost** The cost of the proposed Board Street Parkway ($60 million) is extravagant and out of scale. Almost all of the major street network (arterial and collector street) within Nashua is in need of major expenditure for preservation and upgrading. Reducing the scope of the proposed Broad Street Parkway and redirecting the "savings" in funds to other needed projects throughout the City would, in all likelihood, yield a far greater level of return per dollar expended.
- **Land Consumption** The sweeping curves, dictated by the higher design speed of the proposed Parkway, consume large amounts of land for the roadway footprint itself, and further

render a number of land parcels into unusable fragments. Such land gained in excess of real footprint is not suitable for other uses, such as park land or an adjacent trail. The intersections (particularly at Ledge Street, with its seven-lane approach) are notably larger than anything now existing on any surface street within the City of Nashua.

- **Neighborhood Impact** The proposed Broad Street Parkway design terminates in the Tree Streets neighborhood. More accurately, it obliterates a good part of a neighborhood by terminating there.
- **Unimodal** The proposed design is heavily oriented toward moving the maximum possible volume of vehicles, at the highest reasonable speed. Travel by other modes – bicycling and walking – do not appear to be a serious consideration in the design. The design does not appear to integrate the regional walking and bicycling system, despite the fact that the new design constitutes a major acquisition of new land and provides a new river crossing.

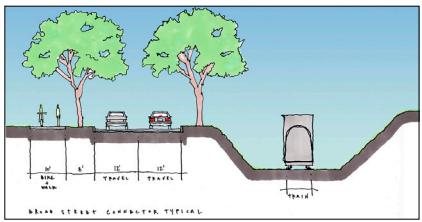
### Preferred Alternative, Broad Street Parkway

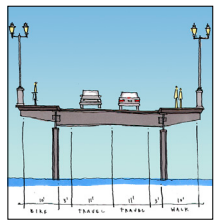
The Master Plan team, in realization of the challenges associated with the currently proposed Broad Street Parkway, proposes the following modifications to the plan:

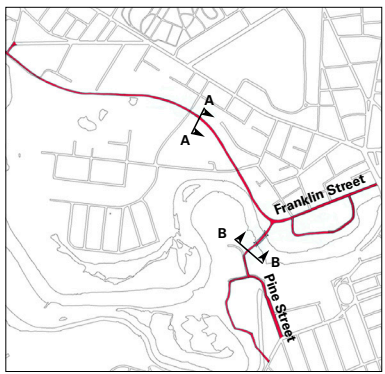
- **Road Type** In contrast to the currently proposed limited access road, the master plan recommends a controlled access street. On such a street, high-value fronting properties are encouraged, and are given vehicular access under controlled conditions (carefully planned driveway spacing, rear alley connections, etc.). Rather than minimizing the number of intersections, the preferred alternative would seek to maximize intersections. Specifically, to the south of the Nashua River, the preferred alternative would be carefully woven into the fabric of five or six local streets, rather than obliterating them and imposing a new single intersection.
- **Design Speed** The preferred Broad Street Parkway has a design speed of 25-30 miles per hour, appropriate for a new arterial street in an urban area. The lower design speed permits more compact geometric design of the street, smaller intersections, reduced sight distance requirements, makes on-street parking more feasible, greatly improves the pedestrian atmosphere, permits plantings and street furniture to be placed closer to the street, and generally reflects the desirable traits of existing streets in Nashua.
- **Number of Lanes** The preferred alternative should have two through lanes (i.e., a single through lane in each direction). At intersections, a third left-turn lane should be provided. Right-turn auxiliary lanes

should not be provided. A two-lane roadway provides an increment of capacity that is far more than adequate for any reasonable projection of new downtown growth in Nashua.

- **Address Value** The design features of the preferred Parkway – specifically its accessibility, design speed and size – should add to the value of the road as an address. Supporting City policies (zoning, redevelopment initiatives, etc.) should foster the role of the road as an armature for new development.
- **East/West Street Connection to Franklin Street** A major advantage of the preferred alternative over the currently standing Broad Street proposal is the connection to Franklin Street on the north side of the








**Broad Street Parkway**

*The preferred alternative for the Broad Street Parkway (left) will provide access to redevelopment opportunities, as well as reduce congestion at Railroad Square.*

*Recommended cross-section (section A-A) (top left)*

*Recommended cross-section of Parkway at the new bridge (section B-B) (top right)*

Nashua River. This connection creates a new east/west route parallel to Broad Street and Amherst Street, and permits east/west through traffic (from Everett Turnpike interchanges 6 and 7 to the Hollis Street/Merrimack River crossing) to divert from Broad Street and Amherst Street, to use Franklin Street and Canal Street instead, and thereby avoid the major congestion at the multi-leg intersection at Railroad Square. Although the currently proposed Parkway could redirect some of this same through movement southward across the new Nashua River crossing (thereby evading the Railroad Square location), the current plan does not create a new east/west connection, but simply adds the redirected through traffic to the already high volumes on Hollis Street and Kinsley Street.

- **Local Street Connections** The preferred alternative, rather than obliterating street connections in the Millyard and Tree Streets neighborhood, will create a fabric of new connections and small streets. The preferred alternative will have far less impact on local streets than the currently standing proposal, because: (1) it will deliver only a single lane of traffic across the Nashua River in each direction and (2) it will disperse its traffic to a number of local street connections, rather than focusing onto a single new large intersection at Ledge Street.
- **Land Consumption** The preferred alternative will consume far less land than the currently proposed Broad Street Parkway. The controlled access feature (as contrasted to the limited access feature of the current proposal) will require the taking of fewer properties, since fronting property value will be increased, not obliterated, by the road. The more compact geometric design of the road, manifested in low design speeds, small frequent intersections, and two-lane cross section, will greatly reduce the land needed for the road footprint itself. Rather than obliterating much of the neighborhood land at the southern terminus, the preferred design would restore this land to dense urban uses.
- **Cost** The compact right-of-way, two-lane cross section and lack of limited-access purchases will yield a preferred Broad Street alternative that is most likely a fraction of the cost of the currently proposed alternative. Some individual elements of the cost savings are likely to be spectacular. For example, the structure for the crossing of the Nashua River, some 1,100 feet in length (4 lanes) under the currently proposed plan, would be less than 200 feet (2 lanes) under the preferred alternative.
- **Neighborhood Impact** An important principle of the preferred alternative is the restoration of

neighborhoods, and creation of new neighborhood fabric, particularly at the southern end of the Parkway. The preferred alternative does this through a downsized street, the adoption of urban street design guidelines, and the connection to the existing street system at numerous points.

- **Multi-Modal** The preferred design is multi-modal, providing connections to the regional trail system and extension of the local trail system.

### An Alternative to Through Traffic: Extension of the Outer Loop

A Broad Street Parkway – either the currently proposed version or the preferred alternative from this Master Plan – is not the answer to through traffic in downtown Nashua. Far more important than the Broad Street Parkway, in any of its versions, is the extension of the Henri A. Burque Highway with another crossing of the Merrimack River.

As part of the original circumferential connector, the Henri A. Burque Highway was designed to provide a "beltway" around downtown. As is often the case with large road projects, the planning process was slower than private development. As a result, intense development occurred in the corridor and the right-of-way. In the 1990's, the idea of extending the Henri A. Burque was "shelved" in favor of a new alignment for the circumferential connector several miles to the north on more easily acquired greenfield land.

Extending the Henri A. Burque was valid many years ago. Today it is still valid, albeit highly unlikely and infeasible. Extending the Henri A. Burque Highway to Hudson will allow traffic generated from Everett Turnpike interchange 6 (Broad Street) and interchange 7 (Amherst Street) destined east to Hudson to do so without traversing Amherst and Canal Streets, and most importantly avoiding Railroad Square and the Hollis Street bridge.

Extension of the Henri A. Burque highway is not likely. Acquisition costs in the foreseeable future are prohibitive. Likewise, NHDOT is in the process of issuing an SEIS on the Circumferential Highway several miles north of the Henri A. Burque However, should conditions in the corridor change such that the extension of the highway becomes, once again feasible, Nashua should pursue this option.

### Preferred Proposal: Design Recommendations

If the City decides to pursue the basic alignment of the current Broad Street Parkway proposal, the following recommendations are made to assure this alignment best serves both downtown and the region.

The Parkway should be true to its name and be designed as a 25-30 mile-per-hour, two lane road, not a 45-50 mile-per-hour, limited access highway as it has been designed as and conceived of.

A two-lane cross-section will reduce the cost of the roadway significantly yet will not reduce its effectiveness.

The Parkway should incorporate trail elements that substantially implement the City's Master Plan for trails and greenways.

All efforts should be made to preserve and protect the Tree Streets Neighborhood, located at the road's southern terminus. The greatest impacts will likely occur on Elm Street between Hollis and Kinsley, now a small residential street, where the roadway will force all regional traffic to converge.

The Broad Street Parkway proposal will require traffic modeling in order to confirm the strategic assumptions and decisions. It is important to note that traffic modeling, by itself, should not be considered a litmus test for good (or bad) transportation proposals. Rather they should be used as a tool to help evaluate proposals.

# II Trails

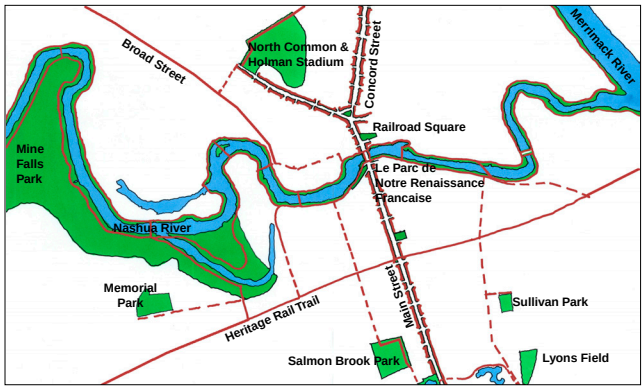


A FRAMEWORK OF TRAILS is as important to Nashua as a new framework of streets. People will choose to move to and invest in Nashua because of a package of amenities – not simply because it is affordable or proximate to employment opportunities. Creating a well-developed, well-connected park and trail system will contribute to Nashua's quality of life and make Downtown an integral part of the lives of all Nashua residents, as well as other residents of the region. Its natural assets will attract homebuyers and visitors searching for a connected and public life. Investments in trails will:

- provide recreational outlets for both residents and visitors to Nashua
- weave together important places in the City for individuals and families on bike or on foot
- provide an alternate means of commuting to Downtown
- be a draw for tourists as a connection between the abundant heritage resources Nashua has to offer
- provide improved air quality by offering access to the City without the automobile

**Loops and Connections**

*The new Downtown riverfront park will connect into the larger regional open space system, linking Mine Falls Park to the Merrimack River and other Downtown open space amenities. Dotted red lines indicate on-street bikeways. Solid red lines indicate paths and trails.*



- serve an economic development objective by providing a valuable leisure activity for individuals and families.

The idea of an extensive trail system is already a part of the City's 1993 Trails Plan, adopted as part of the City's Master Plan, as well as the region's long-range plan. This Master Plan illustrates how trail systems can be implemented by private and public initiatives recommended in this Plan.

A trail would line both sides of the Nashua River in the Downtown, linking together the new parks, as well as Mine Falls Park . Multiple river crossings create "loops" in the Downtown, connecting many nodes and attractions along the trail system. Short loops in the Downtown are particularly important because they make short excursions on foot, such as a walk during a lunch hour, interesting and enjoyable.

The riverfront park system proposed in this Master Plan will be connected to Mine Falls Park, thus connecting to the City's predominately residential areas west of the Interstate. This wider connection will open up Downtown as a destination for families and recreationists who would not otherwise go Downtown for anything other than an occasional visit. These trail connections will help expand the appeal of Downtown to all residents of Nashua, not just those living east of the Interstate.

# III Design Guidelines




DESIGN GUIDELINES ARE NECESSARY to encourage new development along Main Street South and to reinforce and support the overall goals of this Master Plan. The design guidelines that follow can be applied to new private development opportunities along Main Street South, between Hollis Street and Salmon Brook Park. Within this area, however, the Master Plan defines two very different areas of development:

1. A retail node between Otterson Street and Salmon Brook Park, distinct from, yet complementary to, Main Street North.
2. A mixed-use area between Hollis and Otterson Streets that respects the architecture and urban design of the existing historic mansions, apartment buildings and institutions.

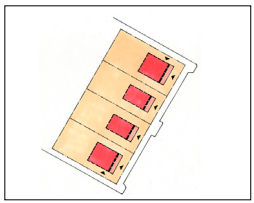
As such, two sets of design guidelines are developed to address desired development patterns for these areas.

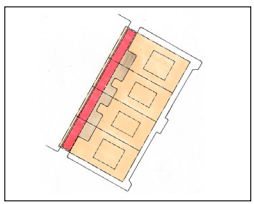
Design guidelines present standards for new development. They should be supported by the new zoning code to assure development compatibilities, minimize design review friction, insure investor confidence, and ultimately that new, urban buildings will be appropriate to their context and contributory to the overall health of Downtown Nashua.

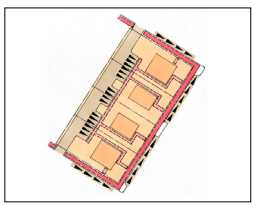
## Main Street between Hollis and Otterson

### Urban Design Intent

The urban design intent in this area is to strengthen Downtown by creating a transitional zone between the two retail nodes along Main Street North and South. This area should contain smaller buildings with residential, institutional or office uses. Retail development should be discouraged. The form of the buildings should relate to the existing residential buildings; that is, they should be narrow and deep buildings with small yards on all sides.





**Massing**
*(top)*
*Buildings should be domestic in form, two stories and evenly spaced.*

**Siting**
*(second)*
*Buildings should be set back approximately 15 feet, with one front entry per building.*

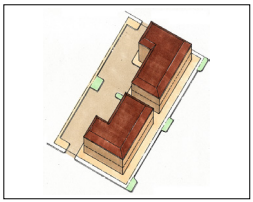
**Easement**
*(third)*
*A rear easement is required to coordinate an efficient parking, circulation and service system.*

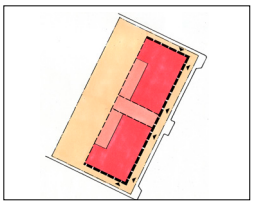
**Parking and Pedestrian Circulation**
*(bottom)*
*All parking should be in the rear and on-street. Pedestrian circulation A walkway should connect the sidewalk to the front door.*

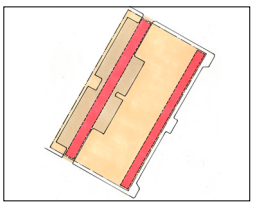
## Main Street between Otterson and Salmon Brook

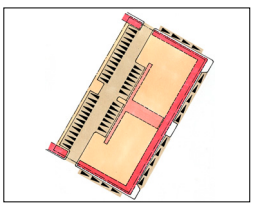
### Urban Design Intent

The urban design intent in this area is to concentrate Downtown's retail growth potential in a second retail node along Main Street South by creating mixed-use buildings with mandatory, traditional retail storefronts on the round floor. Broad sidewalks, street trees, on-street parking, awnings, and active storefronts will create a vibrant pedestrian-oriented retail node.







**Massing**
*(top)*
*One to three story buildings should be simple, well-proportioned masses that front the street.*

**Siting**
*(second)*
*Buildings must be located on the sidewalk, with multiple entries to multiple storefronts.*

**Easement**
*(third)*
*A front easement is required to create a broad sidewalk. The rear easement is required to provide access to parking, service and and a clear circulation system.*

**Parking and Pedestrian Circulation**
*(bottom)*
*Each block should have a mid-block pedestrian connection. This path can be either interior to the building or an exterior walkways to access parking behind the buildings.*

## Residential Design Guidelines

The Master Plan identifies several sites throughout Downtown for new housing. These sites fall into two categories: (1) extensions and insertions into old neighborhoods and (2) former commercial or industrial sites.

The architectural character of new housing should be based upon traditional patterns found throughout and proven successful in Downtown Nashua. Adherence to guidelines is more critical on sites adjacent to or within existing neighborhoods.

Essential characteristics of housing adjacent to or within existing neighborhoods:

- simple, straightforward volumes with gabled or hipped roofs
- windows and doors with wide but vertical proportions
- simplified details and trim
- orderly, but not necessarily symmetrical relationships between windows, doors, and overall building mass
- buildings setback approximately 20 feet from the sidewalk, consistent with surrounding houses, providing a shallow yard zone.

*Typical massing of houses (top)*

*Detail of entrance (second)*

*Perspective of Bronstien Homes (bottom)*

# IV Implementation



The Master Plan will be implemented over ten years. Upon completion, approximately 500 new residential units, and 500,000 square feet of new square feet of commercial space will be added to Downtown Nashua. In addition, with construction of a new Performing Arts Center, The Center for Nashua Heritage and Future Technology, riverfront parks, and trail connections, the downtown will be strengthened as the region's center for cultural and entertainment, and recreational networks.

Completion of this Master Plan will create two legacies. The first will be a revitalized downtown with a diversified economy that benefits all residents of Nashua. Downtown Nashua will become the soul of the region, and a critical component to the region's superior quality of life.

Second and equally important will be the legacy of partnerships and civic cooperation that are critical to realize the visions of this Master Plan. The Master Plan should not be thought of as a way to spend scarce public dollars - rather it should be thought of as a way to form partnerships, raise capital, and leverage resources.

The ideas set forth in this plan come from the vested interests of the City's diverse body of residents and investors. They rely on a coordinated, cooperative and active public sector working in tandem with an entrepreneurial private sector. The results of this private-public partnership will benefit current and future generations of Nashuans.

## Phasing of Priority Projects

The priority projects within the first phase of implementation will include

- Main Street South (Design and Engineering)
- Bronstein Homes (Design and Hope VI Application)
- Broad Street Parkway (Design and Engineering)
- One Way Street Conversion Study
- Center for Nashua Heritage and Future Technology (fundraising)

The priority projects within the second phase of implementation (years 3-6) will include:

- Main Street South (begin construction)
- Broad Street Parkway (begin construction)
- Bronstein Homes (begin construction)
- Riverfront Parks (design and engineering)
- Performing Arts Center (feasibility study)
- Center for Nashua Heritage and Future Technology (design)

The priority projects within the final phase of the implementation will include:

- Riverfront Parks and related development projects (construction)
- Center for Nashua Heritage and Future Technology (construction)
- Performing Arts Center (construction)

**Phasing Diagram**

*Design, Engineering, Feasibility and Fundraising for primary projects described in the Master Plan are shown in blue Primary construction projects are shown in red; Phase One : (years 1-3) (top)*

*Phase Two: (years 3-6) (middle)*

*Phase Three: (years 7-10) (bottom)*

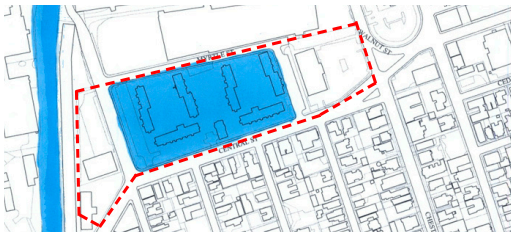
## Acquisition and Strategy

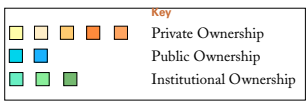
Many of the Master Plan initiatives, particularilly those listed in the previous section as *priority projects* will be relatively simple to implement because of the lack of complicated property acquisition. In most cases much of the required property is either owned by a single private entity or by a public body.

**Bronstein Homes**

*(top)*
*Ownership*

*(bottom)*
*Illustrative Plan*

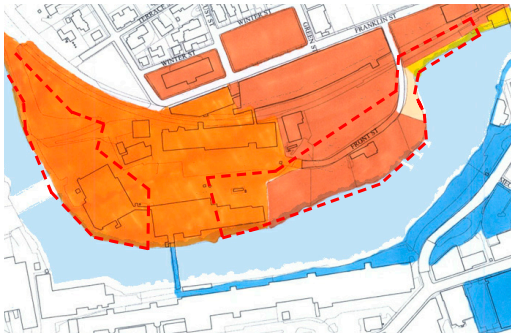


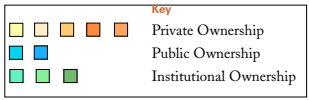



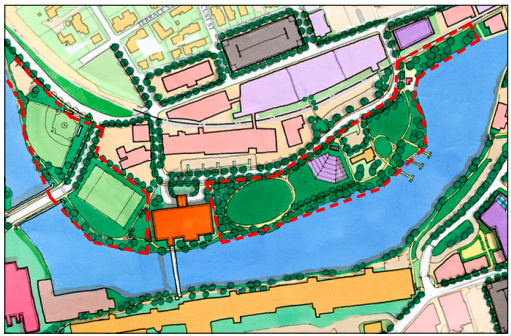

**Riverfront West Park**

*(top)*
*Ownership*

*(bottom)*
*Illustrative Plan*



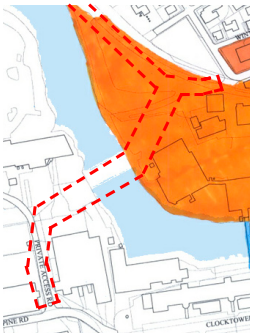
**Riverfront East Park and Performing Arts Center**
*(top)*
*Ownership*

*(bottom)*
*Illustrative Plan*



**Broad Street Parkway**
*(left)*
*Ownership*

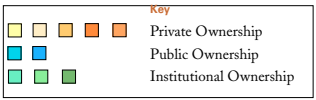
*(right)*
*Illustrative Plan*

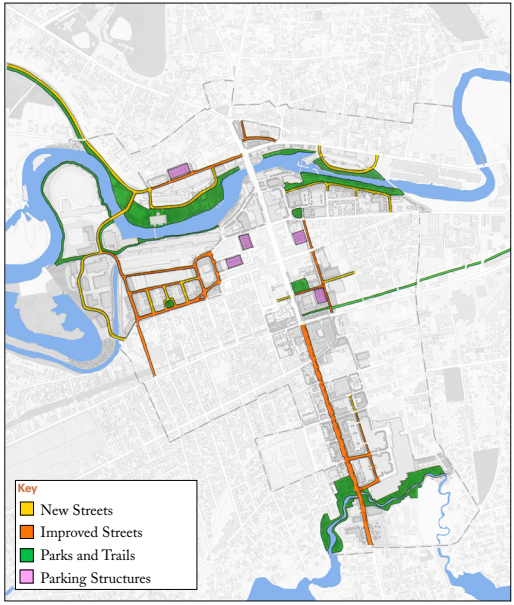


**Nashua Center For Heritage and Future Technology**

*(left)*
*Ownership*

*(right)*
*Illustrative Plan*






**Public Infrastructure**

*The Master Plan recommends public action be taken to crate infrastructure that will leverage substantial private investment.*

**Infrastructure Quantities**

*The table below is to be used to generate preliminary estimates of costs. Locally appropriate per unit costs can be applied to the values in the table.*

| | Riverfront West | Riverfront East | Railroad Square | Main Street North | Main Street South | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| New Streets | 10,650 lf | 3,150 lf | 0 | 650 lf | 250 lf | 14,700 lf |
| Improved Streets | 6,350 lf | 0 | 700 lf | 2,200 lf | 4700 lf | 13,950 lf |
| Parks | 8.2 acres | 7.5 acres | 0 | .7 acres | 6.4 acres | 22.8 acres |
| Parking Structures | 520 spaces | 0 | 0 | 640 spaces | 300 spaces | 1,460 spaces |
| Trails outside Parks | 9,600 lf | 250 lf | 0 | 3,300 lf | 0 | 13,150 lf |